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Peace Accords in Northeast India: Journey over Milestones

Swarna Rajagopalan

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by Swarna Rajagopalan

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List of Acronyms

AAGSP	All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (All Assam Council of People's Movement)
AASU	All-Assam Students Union
ABSU	All-Bodo Students Union
ADC	Autonomous District Council
AFSPA	Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1980
AGP	Asom Gana Parishad (Assam People's Council)
BLT	Bodo Liberation Tigers
BNLF	Bru National Liberation Front
BTC	Bodoland Territorial Council
DGHC	Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council
FGN	Federal Government of Nagaland
GNLF	Gorkhaland National Liberation Front
HPC	Hmar People's Convention
MNF	Mizo National Front
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding

NDFB	National Democratic Front of Bodoland
NNC	Naga National Council
NSCN	National Socialist Council of Nagaland
NSCN (IM)	National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isaak-Muivah)
SULFA	Surrendered ULFA
TNV	Tripura National Volunteers
TTAADC	Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Councils
TUJS	Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti (Tripura Tribal Youth Committee)
ULFA	United Liberation Front of Assam

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Executive Summary

Northeast India is most commonly studied by outsiders as a theater of insurgency and counterinsurgency. A high degree of mutual alienation marks the relationship between the population of Northeast India and Indians on the other side of the narrow land corridor that connects this region to the rest of the country. Integration without consent, colonial attitudes, nativism, legal and illegal migration, relative deprivation, cultural nationalism, irredentism, and, increasingly in some places, criminalization have sparked violent conflict in the region over more than five decades.

In attempts to bring an end to the conflicts, numerous peace accords have been signed by insurgent groups, state governments, and the Government of India. This study of thirteen peace accords signed from 1949 to 2005 examines the efficacy and utility of peace accords in bringing an end to conflict in Northeast India over the last six decades, with the goals of (1) making recommendations to policymakers involved in conflict resolution and peace-building efforts in India and (2) increasing international understanding of the role of peace accords in creating conditions for sustainable peace.

Peace accords are usually regarded as formal agreements between conflict parties, and can take many forms: from the minimal form of a cease-fire agreement to the scope of a mini-constitution. Policymakers and parties to a conflict often view peace accords as endpoints that have the sole purpose of bringing an immediate and permanent end to a conflict—an expectation that is seldom met. Critics of this view suggest it is more meaningful to regard them as frameworks for further negotiations, and to regard their impact on actors and events as a shift that can alter the course

of history. Unfortunately, this change in direction does not always lead toward peace.

Peace accords, whether minimalist cease-fires or mini-constitutions, usually form part of a process. The path to an accord—that is, the degree of acrimony, the number of setbacks, which groups are included in the talks, and so forth—is often more important than the accord itself, and the timing of the accord can depend on each side's assessment of the course of the conflict and whether its military operation is likely to lead to further gains or even "victory" on the battlefield. The "success" of a peace accord lies in the ability of an agreement to facilitate a dynamic of peace-building and reconciliation. In other words, the signing of a peace accord may be a stopping-point, an imposition, or an act that impacts the course of history as it unfolds, but most importantly, it is not an endpoint.

The accord-making experiences in Northeast India have barely shown any characteristics of processes that would lead to a lasting peace. Preaccord talks have not been inclusive; the provisions agreed upon with one group frequently and patently conflict with the interests of others; and the accords either contain provisions to address core conflict issues in a manner that cannot be implemented or they do not deal with core issues at all. Finally, in six decades since Indian independence, no responsive and accountable political infrastructure has been created either for conflict resolution or for governance itself.

Outstanding conflicts and the continuing ability of the United Liberation Front of Assam to operate raise questions about political will and sincerity that envelop all other discussions as well. As seen in the thirteen examples of peace accords reviewed in this study, measures to end conflict can generate further conflict when important stakeholders are left out of a peace process, dissenters can split off from an insurgent organization rather than surrender, the negotiations and the terms of an accord can address one group's concerns without taking into account those of another, and, finally, the terms of an accord can demonstrate to other communities what might be available to them if they also were to undertake violent insurgent operations.

In Northeast India, numerous peace accords have provided for the redistribution of authority by creating either territorial or nonterritorial means of representation and self-governance—a time-honored conflict resolution measure. One useful lesson from the patterns of peace accords in Northeast India is that when many administrative levels exist through

which a group's status can be upgraded, the parties to a conflict have more room for negotiation (rather than being stuck with only a few options presented in an all or nothing fashion). On the other hand, devolution of power remains a real problem in the region, and creating new administrative or territorial units is not a guarantor of viability, resource independence, or autonomy. Moreover, overlapping and intersecting visions limit the utility of almost any solution that an accord may enshrine.

Peace accords have value as bookmarks in peace processes, which work when they are oriented not solely toward the signing of accords, but toward the creation and sustainable implementation of an inclusive platform for dialogue that over time becomes part of the mainstream political process.

Five important lessons are derived from this comparative study of peace accords in Northeast India:

1. *Promote a peace process rather than expect a peace accord to be a cure-all:* Mediators, facilitators, and funders must shift their focus away from accord-making. Instead, all parties need to work to create multiple platforms for dialogue at every level; and at the same time urge the creation of channels for feedback to the main negotiators.
2. *Invest in civil society:* Because every discussion must consider the role and nature of the peace process, the importance of building and reinforcing the capacity of civil society to participate in and support such a process by creating constituencies for peace becomes clear.
3. *Broaden the constituencies and issues addressed at the peace table:* A new and improved peace process should take an inclusive, open-ended, "round-table" approach so that it will have a better chance of accommodating overlapping claims.
4. *Take a holistic view, but disaggregate the solution:* Facilitators and negotiators should take a broad view of the conflict context, but nonetheless mark each area of common understanding with a separate written agreement. With a separate platform for resolving each specific issue, the peace process can remain alive even in the face of violations.
5. *Imagine nonterritorial solutions:* Territorial solutions are not always feasible and may create new conflicts, making it imper-

ative to find nonterritorial accommodations that are both imaginative and pragmatic.

A process-oriented approach to peacemaking, where accords simply function as bookmarks for particular agreements, accommodates the reality of constant change by setting up the modalities for future renegotiation, privileges the creation of inclusive consultative processes, and prioritizes dialogue and consultation. Such an approach facilitates the incorporation of the peace process into the practice of everyday politics and over time, the impulse to articulate interests through violence and simulate peace building through accord signing are both rendered redundant.

Peace Accords in Northeast India: Journey over Milestones

Outsiders most commonly study Northeast India—a region joined to the rest of the country by a thirty-seven kilometer wide sliver of land and divided from it by a high degree of alienation—as a theater of insurgency and counterinsurgency. The region historically has been comprised of seven administrative states that lie to the east of this narrow corridor: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura. Officially, an eighth state, Sikkim, was added to the region in 2003, although Sikkim is not contiguous with the other states of the Northeast. People, ethnic groups, issues, and conflicts all cut across these state lines, and in some cases the administrative demarcations themselves are contested. Integration without consent, Indian colonial attitudes, nativism, legal and illegal migration, relative deprivation, cultural nationalism, irredentism and, increasingly in some places, criminalization have inflamed violent conflict in the region for more than five decades.

For those living in the Northeast, India lies beyond this corridor, and for those to the west, the Northeast slips out of their consciousness except when a very dramatic violent incident occurs or a peace accord is signed. Such episodic engagement, along with a complex set of political and historical issues, has translated into an emphasis on peace accords as a pivotal means for stemming the violence, resolving conflicts, and reconstructing normal social relations.

This study questions the efficacy and utility of peace accords in bringing an end to conflict in Northeast India. An examination of thirteen accords signed in the region between 1949 and 2005 forms the empirical basis of the analysis.

Three accords were signed with Naga rebel groups, in 1949, 1960, and 1975. The 1949 accord promised Nagas a measure of autonomy. In 1960, they gained statehood. In 1975, undefined "underground groups" surrendered, but the conflict continued. One persistent problem was that each set of negotiations engaged only a small subset of those who were fighting. The same mistake was made in two agreements with Bodo separatist groups in Assam State over autonomy arrangements within the state, with the result that the negotiating process is piecemeal and endless. The Assam State government has also entered into agreements with other ethnic organizations in the state to create territorial and nonterritorial representative arrangements with a small measure of autonomy. Besides the fact that important stakeholders are often left out of negotiations, these arrangements occasionally undercut each other. A lack of clarity also beleaguers the autonomous Darjeeling Hill Council established by the 1988 accord between the Government of India, the Government of West Bengal State, and the Gorkhaland National Liberation Front; it is not clear to which administrative tier of the Indian Union the new district belongs. Accords signed in Tripura State appear to have made no difference to the escalating violence because militant groups there have been functioning more like transborder criminal organizations than ideologically or politically motivated groups with whom there is a starting point or a core set of issues for negotiation. In spite of the fact that illegal immigration, nativism, and citizenship are contentious almost everywhere in Northeast India, only the 1985 Assam Accord has addressed these questions, yet the provisions of that accord have not proven viable or easy to implement.

The Mizo Accord of 1986 is considered uniquely successful. One important reason for its success has been the ethnically inclusive mobilization of the Mizo National Front around a regional rather than ethnic identity. The accord however, addressed a single group's concerns over others, and cracks in this unified front have necessitated further accord making with the Bru and Hmar ethnic groups.

This study of thirteen peace agreements buttresses my argument that although peace accords might constitute milestones, they cannot be expected to either end violence conclusively or solve the problems that led

to the conflict. In other words, peace accords intrinsically comprise neither landmarks nor final destinations. The creation of a consistent, inclusive, and open-ended dialogue process is more likely to yield a sustainable social transformation than a single accord or a succession of accords, however well intentioned they might be. By their very nature, accords focus on finite, measurable, and immediate outcomes and milestones. In contrast, an inclusive, consultative, and sustained peace process is a prerequisite to a good peace accord, where "good" is defined as taking into account the interests of all stakeholders and thinking solutions through so that implementation problems are anticipated. Quick fix solutions do not work.

peace accords...cannot be expected to...end violence conclusively

Omnibus accords that patch together ceasefire, cultural, and compromise provisions may be doomed to failure. Ceasefires are often breached; cultural guarantees are set aside; and compromise provisions are abandoned as a result. Implementation is focused narrowly on, and depends on, ending violence. It is too easy to fall into the trap in which parties to an accord take an episodic view of conflict. As John Paul Lederach argues, although accords that bring a quick end to conflict have pragmatic and humanitarian value, such accords are "social and political antacids" (Lederach 2005: 48), incapable of improving the health of the polity in the long run. Comprehensive accords are also intrinsically challenging because signatories can change their minds, think of other issues that they would like addressed, or simply desire more from the other party(ies) as the next step. Furthermore, negotiation is part of accord making and by its very nature involves compromise. By definition, no one will leave negotiations with their original positions intact. This can result in loss of face and dissatisfaction for the negotiating parties, which leaves the door open to prolonged conflict.

Although we generally expect a peace accord to result in peace, conflict generally follows these agreements for four specific reasons. First, important stakeholders are often left out of the peace process, deliberately or accidentally. Second, a signatory organization can split, with dissenters forming other armed groups. Third, an accord may address the concerns of one group at the expense of another. When different communities and groups lay claim to the same land and resources, it is difficult

to reach an enduring solution. Finally, accords have a demonstration effect that prompts other communities and groups to demand the same privileges. As Lederach states, an "agreement represents processes for continuing the conflict under new definitions" (Ibid.: 46).[1]

The redistribution of authority through territorial or nonterritorial restructuring of government administration and representation is a common demand and a common palliative included in accords, but this can work in two ways. Having several means of upgrading a group's political status creates more space for negotiation, but creating too many units can lead to a proliferation of unviable, and therefore unsustainable, autonomous units.

State building involves the consolidation of territory, institutionalization of processes and practices, and development of an ability to enforce the law. How these processes alter a state's capacity and willingness to negotiate peace at different points is worth considering, especially because statehood is a shared aspiration on many sides of a peace table. States also show more interest in resolving some conflicts than others. This can be due to elites viewing some communities as equal interlocutors and others with a civilizing mission (Das 2005a: 124–28) rather than to a lack of political will or ability to solve particular conflicts.

Lederach's suggestion that we move away from a focus on peace accords that end violence and instead consider a broader approach that would build platforms where different parties can engage with each other and create social change is appealing in light of these conclusions (Lederach 2005: 46–48). This shift would do away with the distinction between pre-accord and postaccord periods and would recognize that change is an ongoing process. Lederach signals three necessary changes of perspective: (1) that in order to build these platforms, we have to bring people together who have been divided or at conflict; (2) the platforms matter more than the solutions; and (3) this is because they generate processes that produce transformative solutions.

This monograph begins by examining what scholars and practitioners have to say about peace accords. The second section maps thirteen peace accords between different levels of government and political and militant groups in Northeast India from 1949 and 2005. This period coincides with several phases of the Indian state-building experiment. These phases are examined in the third section, which is an analysis of concerns and trends seen in the thirteen peace accords. The monograph concludes with an examination of lessons learned in Northeast India.

Peace Accords and Building Peace

Peace accords receive a great deal of attention from the media and academia. They alter the perception that a conflict is intractable, and they induce optimism where there was despair, if only for a brief period. Scholars and practitioners alike have written about peace accords, and the line between scholarship and field practice is quite often blurred, as scholars in the field of conflict resolution and peace building also engage in mediation and teach conflict transformation to local peacemakers. This study examines whether or not peace accords are actually effective at ending conflicts and laying the foundation for peace.

Peace accords...alter the perception that a conflict is intractable

Peace accords have been defined simply as "a formal commitment between hostile parties to end a war" (Anderlini 2004: 16). At minimum they are ceasefires, and at most they are frameworks for social and political transformation. As frameworks, they may be broad guidelines or a complex set of detailed arrangements that provide the groundwork for a new dispensation. Accords that go beyond ceasefires and terms of reference for further talks are likely to include provisions related to "independence/autonomy/power-sharing," human rights, and "'fair' distribution of resources/employment" (de Varennes 2002: 55).

Two creative thinkers and contemporary writers on peace and conflict, John Paul Lederach and Ranabir Samaddar, step beyond this literal perspective. Lederach observes that much of the literature on peace accords views them in a linear image of conflict and peace: "the rising then falling line of escalation" (Lederach 2005: 44). In this view, escalation takes time, but violence ends very soon after an accord. Moreover, he observes, the expectation that agreements mean a solution has been found is unrealistic. Rather, he states, "Most peace accords are not solutions in content but proposed negotiated processes, which if followed, will change the expression of the conflict and provide avenues for redefining relationships" (Ibid.: 45). Lederach refutes the idea that peace accords mark a culmination or "an end-game scenario," saying rather that they provide a segué to a new process with redefined relationships (Lederach 1999).

Samaddar lists several definitions of a peace accord. These agreements can be "texts of resolution of conflicts, . . .protocols of power, scripts of

status, arrangements of prestige, and the invitational metaphors for further conflicts and peace" (Samaddar 1999: 1). According to Samaddar, they are not to be seen as organic historical stopping points but as acts that impact the course of history as it unfolds, creating their own consequences.

Peace processes may also be seen as yet another way that people with different interests attempt to come to a working relationship that allows them to live together. In such a view, described by Das as instrumentalist (Das 2005a: 122), accords are cooperative, functional arrangements. Based on his study of peace processes in Northeast India, Das defines accords as constructs that the rivaling parties have made for themselves, and once they are entered into, they seem not only to exist independently of whatever the signatories think about them, but shape and mould their thoughts and practices—"subjectifying" themselves as it were, by laying down the modalities on the basis of which their affairs are supposed to be conducted in future. (Ibid.)

Das's view is based on two assumptions. Given that neither the Indian state nor any ethnic group has successfully prevailed in a conflict, most conflicts settle into a pattern of attrition, and the accords reflect this. In Das's words, "The battle . . . is embedded in the accords. . . . Since the accords embody [a] battle that is protracted and indecisive, they pertain to nobody" (Das 2005a: 123). In other words, because we tend to seek solutions for the last problem sighted, in a protracted conflict the accord is more likely to address the last provocation preceding its negotiation rather than the root causes of the conflict. Moreover, while accords are preceded by ethnic discord, not all conflicts are followed by accords. This idea prompts Das to examine why some antagonists qualify as potential accord makers and others do not, and to analyze how an accord changes the conflict and its signatories (even by offering them a chance to change their part in the process).

If peace accords propose new negotiating frameworks, on the one hand, and seek to impose new terms on an existing structure, on the other, then they need to be evaluated within their longer-term historical contexts to determine their success as a peace-building device.

Peace accords are highly unlikely to be reached overnight; they usually mark an important step in a longer peace process. Thus, an understanding of the relevant peace process must inform the study of a peace accord. This approach illustrates the difference between the more limited conflict resolution or conflict management approach and a holistic conflict trans-

formation or peace-building approach that places accords and even peace processes in the context of the need for fundamental sociopolitical change.

Peace processes can broadly be divided into three phases: prenegotiation, negotiation, and postnegotiation (Anderlini 2004: 17–19). The run-up to the first phase can itself be fraught with difficulties, and in ice-breaker discussions, logistical and protocol issues are usually ironed out. The agenda for the peace talks is also set at this time. In his summary of practitioners' perspectives on resolution of ethnic conflict, Marc Howard Ross describes a two-step approach to talks, with both steps roughly equivalent to what Sanam Naraghi Anderlini terms "pre-negotiation." The first step is confidence-building, that is, building mutual trust between the conflict parties, a belief in the possibility of structural change, and trust that each side will seek a mutually beneficial agreement (Ross 2000: 1002). As the recent Sri Lankan experience shows, this stage can be like a time-warp, as parties to the conflict buy time to stall or rearm, and the likelihood of fruitful talks recedes. The second step broadly encompasses several sets of negotiations. In this phase, discussions center on certain key dimensions: the conditions and timing of negotiations, who is involved in the talks, and approaches to making the talks happen.

When is the time right for negotiations? This question is important because in many instances the prenegotiation phase can be interminable. A problem-solving orientation characterizes much of the academic writing on accords, peace processes, and negotiations. Coming largely out of the West, this literature centers on a shared concern: to create the conditions where negotiations and resolution of conflict become possible. However, a plurality of approaches—practical and theoretical—informs analyses of conflict and peace.

William Zartman writes about a window of opportunity for the conflict parties to negotiate: parties are most likely to negotiate when they come to feel as if all other means of getting what they want are blocked and they are at a costly impasse. At this point, antagonists find certain solutions appealing that they had ignored in the past (Zartman 2001: 8). The perception of ripeness, he writes, follows from a mutually painful stalemate. Lederach has called this a saturation point or exhaustion level. Marty Anderson adds an important dimension to this idea: The point at which conflicting parties are most likely to negotiate occurs "when people realize the 'system of violence' has become more oppressive than the initial injustice" (quoted in Lederach 1999). The window is a narrow

one, and Zartman points out that failing to act can close it very fast (Zartman 2001: 13). Yet another dimension of timing is important: all the actors involved have to share the same perception of ripeness at the same moment.

Frederic Pearson offers a minimal view of what it takes to make an accord work: negotiators should at least be able to work together and agree on what they sign off on (Pearson 2001: 275). We may surmise the following facilitating conditions for peace processes, based on Marc Howard Ross's analysis (Ross 2000). Community organizations must build capacity and network locally, with a view to transforming their interactions substantively. "Principled negotiation" must be promoted as a value so that conflict parties can agree to "separate the people from the problem, focus on interests, not positions; generate a variety of possibilities before deciding what to do; and insist that the result be based on some objective standard" (Fisher and Ury 1983, quoted in Ross 2000: 1012, and in Richardson and Wang 1992). Third parties can help the conflict parties identify common needs through analytical problem-solving. Track Two interactions build trust and make it possible to recognize that a great deal of anger and grief has been accumulating on all sides during the years of conflict. Third-party mediation can also serve to translate miscommunication that occurs due to cultural differences or to create awareness that there is a communication problem. A reconciliation process at the grassroots level involving communities and their leadership can transform problematic relationships rather than resolve only the manifestations of the conflict.

State building and peacemaking are both coalition- and community-building processes. Formulating and formalizing the distribution of authority is at the core of state building, and it is the distribution of authority that combatants are seeking to change when conflict breaks out. Mohammed Ayoob has argued that most security problems in the developing world arise from the imperatives of the state-building process (Ayoob 1995). A corollary of this must be that certain moments in the state-building process create a space for peacemaking. The moment of state formation is one with potential to create conflict or cooperation. In Northeast India, this

certain moments in the state-building process create a space for peacemaking

moment came in the context of Indian independence and subcontinental partition and contributed to the Naga conflict. Another opportunity arises when the state restructures, but any restructuring is bound to please one party and displease the other. So although one conflict may be resolved, others may be born. In 1956, the reorganization of Indian states along linguistic lines assuaged some aspirations and fueled others. External conflicts may be opportunities for unilateral cooperation, as it was with the Dravidian movement during the 1962 India-China war. However, external conflicts are seldom conducive to negotiated domestic peacemaking because the state cannot afford to make any concessions when engaged with a foreign enemy. Moreover, concerns about restive communities working with the external enemy usually motivate coercive rather than persuasive responses.

The juxtaposition of narratives of state building and peace building in Northeast India suggests that although no easy correlation exists between the two, peace building raises many important questions about state-building efforts. The point of departure is to ask what it means to build a state and under what circumstances states and communities within their borders can arrive at a working relationship. Understanding "strength" and "weakness" in the context of states provides a context within which to challenge the ability and willingness of state agencies to use force. Strength can also be identified with accountable, durable, and responsive institutions. A state's tendency to use or abuse violence in its relationship with civil society can be indicative of its unease and lack of autonomy. Good institutions that are run on the basis of generally accepted rules and principles provide a viable medium through which the state-society relationship can be negotiated without violence. This being the case, an increase in a state's autonomy and capacity ought to lead to a decrease in levels of violence and toward successful and sustainable peacemaking.

Who are the participants in a peace process? Traditionally, scholars examined only official actors. Contemporary writers do not merely enumerate several levels of interaction and a wide range of actors, but also make a normative case for multilevel interactions (Lederach 1999). Anderlini (2004: 18, 20) identifies five tracks of talks involving several groups of actors. "Track one" engages official representatives in official bilateral or multilateral talks, which may be exclusive and restricted to two interlocutors or inclusive and multiparty. Informal or unofficial interaction is described as "Track One-and-a-Half." These may sometimes be

low-key negotiations between specially chosen individuals, with or without mediators, usually out of the public gaze. These are also called "back-channel talks" or "shuttle diplomacy." "Track two," which has received a great deal of attention (see Futehally 2005; Chetan Kumar 2006; Das 2005b; Sujan Dutta 2005), involves nonstate actors interested in creating conditions to facilitate the success of track one negotiations. Fourth, peacemaking activities engaging people and groups from different sections of society and the state are described as "multitrack diplomacy."

Along a fifth track, talks may involve third-party mediators or facilitators. In the postsettlement phase, monitors may also be required to ensure compliance to the provisions of the accord. Third parties receive a great deal of attention, possibly because those who write on conflict resolution are often engaged with conflicts outside their own settings as academics or, more likely, as practitioners in conflict resolution, relief, or development. Assessments and lessons learned focus on the potential of these outsider interventions rather than on the situation from an insider perspective.

Do peace accords make a difference? The proof is in the feasibility and sustainability of an accord, which can be determined by asking these further questions: Does the peace process facilitate sustained dialogue and negotiation? Do dialogue and negotiation result in an agreement or series of agreements? And finally, does the accord prove feasible? The success of a conflict resolution initiative may be measured by comparing resulting long-term changes against the initiative's provisions and goals (Ross 2000: 1005).

Implementation may fail due to the absence of enforcement mechanisms, ambiguity in the accord, rigid terms, high expectations, and unpunished defection from the agreement (Crocker and Hampson 1996: 55). Stedman points to the role of spoilers within a conflict setting and to neighboring states that assist them (Stedman 2001). Richardson and Wang suggest that ethnic peace accords, apart from their specific shortcomings, fail because ethnic conflicts are intrinsically intractable (Richardson and Wang 1992). Thus, we cannot hope to achieve peace, or even resolution, but merely to manage the conflict itself. Richardson and Wang further state that protracted conflict diminishes the prospects of peace, as leaders develop a vested interest in the continuation of war.

Reflecting on his experiences in the field of peace building, Lederach identifies three gaps that account for the failure of many peace-building efforts (Lederach 1999). The first is the "Interdependence Gap," which

refers to the failure to engage and interact across levels (elite, middle, and grassroots) in the peace-building process. Lederach writes that "sustainability of peace-building require[s] both horizontal and vertical relationship building and coordination." The "Justice Gap" is the second of Lederach's concerns: Has the need to end violence overshadowed the social and political justice issues that underlay the conflict? If the ripe moment for negotiation is one in which continuing violence is seen to be more inimical than the original injustice or grievance, then the short-term imperative of a respite from violence will obscure the harder, long-standing questions at the root of conflict.

"sustainability of peace-building require[s]... relationship building..."

Finally, Lederach laments the failure of the language we use to conceptualize peace and peacemaking. Speaking of a "Process-Structure Gap," he points out that when we view peace as a process alone, we forget that it needs a framework and modalities to facilitate change. When in our view a peace process culminates in a peace accord (or a series of accords), we translate peace solely as a set of bureaucratic structures. He writes: "Peace is neither a process nor a structure. It is both. Peace building requires us to work at constructing an infrastructure to support a process of desired change, and change is permanent" (Ibid.).

In other words, accords—and indeed, peacemaking—work when they engage parties at all levels and from all segments of society; when they address the issues at the core of the conflict; and when they create an infrastructure for sustaining a dynamic peace rather than modalities for negotiation or institutional structures alone. Lederach's approach allows us to segue from thinking about conflict and peace alone to a broader perspective that sees peace accords as a form of social contract.

As processes by which individuals and groups with sometimes coinciding and sometimes discordant interests come to a way of living and working together, the exercises by which peace, communities, nations, states, and consensus are built—whether in society or coalition government—are variations on a theme that plays out an endless history of interlocution, negotiation, and synthesis. This being the case, perfect conflict resolution or perfect peace settlements are virtually impossible. This recognition opens the door to a more creative and dynamic peace process predicated on four kinds of simultaneous reconciliation efforts that

involve how communities and states view themselves and view their futures vis-à-vis those with whom they must coexist, and that then find a way to synchronize these efforts as they change at varying paces (Rajagopalan 2001: 176–81). These are: (1) squaring the way in which the state and groups within the state see themselves; (2) coming to terms with the different ways in which the groups imagine their futures vis-à-vis each other; (3) finding a middle ground between the territorial aspirations of groups that change faster than their actual situation can change; and (4) harmonizing these visions, which do not change at the same pace in the same way. Reconciliation is easier when territory is not involved, so early accommodation of demands made by groups within a state is a sensible idea. Accepting that everything changes, the willingness to frequently revisit held positions is critical to success—defined as peaceful and cooperative coexistence.

Peace accords, whether minimalist ceasefires or mini-constitutions, usually form part of a process. How parties get to an accord (e.g., the degree of acrimony, the number of setbacks, etc.) is often more important than the accord itself, and the timing of the accord can depend on both sides' assessments of how the conflict is progressing and how it is likely to turn out. Responding early to smaller and nonterritorial demands makes agreement and implementation easier. Who is involved with the process and how seriously they engage with the root causes of the conflict also affect the sustainability of the accord. As Lederach suggests, the "success" of a peace process lies in creating the structures that facilitate a dynamic of peace building and reconciliation. In other words, the signing of a peace accord may be a stopping point, an imposition, or even an act that has great impact on a historical process, but most importantly, it is not an endpoint.

the signing of...[an] accord ...is not an endpoint

Mapping Peace Accords

This section examines thirteen major accords signed by the state and dissident groups in Northeast India, providing profiles of the peacemaking experience (as defined by the accords that punctuate it) in five administrative units within the Indian Union—Assam, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura States and Gorkhaland Autonomous District. These profiles chart

the progression of events leading to each accord, highlight its main provisions, and briefly discuss the implementation and aftermath of the accord.

The previous discussion suggested certain yardsticks by which the efficacy of peace accords might be evaluated, identifying four reference points: (1) the core issues underlying the conflict, (2) the nature of the peace process, (3) the scope and details of the accord, and (4) the aftermath of the accord. In order to be effective and sustainable, the provisions of an accord should address the core issues of the conflict and should seek to transform problematic relationships. Successful accords are moments or markers within a larger peace process that is inclusive of all stakeholders in the conflict. Although negotiating frameworks for further talks and formulating new institutional arrangements are important considerations, accords work best when they create infrastructures to absorb changes on an ongoing basis. That is, anticipating the dynamism of a peace process and the political process is a guarantor of peacemaking success.

Unfortunately, the accord-making experience in Northeast India has hardly incorporated any of these characteristics. Pre-accord talks have not been inclusive. The provisions agreed upon with one group have patently conflicted with the grievances of another; and accords either have dealt with core conflict issues in a manner that cannot be implemented or they have not dealt with them at all. Finally, in six decades, no responsive and accountable political infrastructure has been created for conflict resolution, or even for governance.

The Naga Accords

Writing about the 1947, 1960, and 1975 accords signed by Indian government agents and Naga leaders, Subir Bhaumik points out that they reflect three moments in the Government of India's evolving position vis-à-vis the Naga insurgency (Bhaumik 2005a: 200).

The Nine-Point Agreement, a.k.a. the Naga-Akbar Hydari Accord, 1947

When India was about to gain independence, Naga leaders petitioned the British Government for their own independence, with the rationale that no Indian power had ever conquered them. The British did not see Naga independence as a viable option, and the Indian leadership, already faced with one partition, was loath to entertain the idea of an independent Naga state.[2] The governor of Assam State, Akbar Hydari, and Naga National Council (NNC) representatives from eleven tribes signed a Nine-Point Agreement (also known as the Naga-Akbar Hydari Accord) whereby the

right of Nagas to "develop themselves according to their freely expressed wishes" was recognized. According to Bhaumik, this reflected the new Indian state's hesitation to force the Nagas to integrate, a factor that changed after the successful integration of the princely states (Ibid.).[3] Point nine of the agreement states:

> 9. Period of Agreement – The Governor of Assam as the Agent of the Government of the Indian Union will have a special responsibility for a period of 10 years to ensure the observance of the agreement, at the end of this period the Naga Council will be asked whether they require the above agreement to be extended for a further period or a new agreement regarding the future of Naga people arrived at.

Each side read this provision differently. The Nagas assumed that they would be free to choose their destiny at the end of this ten-year period (Iralu 2005: 183). The Indian side felt that the terms of the agreement were consistent with the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution and that such adjustments as were needed could be made, short of independence (Verghese 2004: 88).

A minority within the Naga National Council rejected the agreement and declared Naga independence one day before India's independence. With its newly gained confidence, the Indian state adopted a two-part strategy in Nagaland of simultaneous counterinsurgency operations and talks with moderates. From the time of the agreement, alienation grew within both the moderate and extremist Naga leadership. By the late 1950s, the moderates had formed a Federal Government of Nagaland and the extremists had raised an army.

The Sixteen-Point Agreement, 1960

The 1960 accord between the Government of India and the Nagas followed an effort over three years by Naga moderates to gather together Naga public opinion on the kind of freedoms the Naga people would seek. To this end they held three conventions across tribes (at Kohima in 1957, at Ungma in 1958, and at Mokokchung in 1959), at the end of which Naga moderates drafted a sixteen-point resolution, which was accepted more or less without change by the Government of India.

The Sixteen-Point Agreement was signed by representatives of the Government of India and the Naga People's Convention, and the State of Nagaland came into existence. Although the agreement was substantive (by

virtue of granting statehood to Nagaland), unlike the Shillong Accord that would follow, it did not resolve any of the main issues. At issue was the Naga claim to self-determination, and moderate and extremist Nagas held different positions on this question. The accord was signed with the Naga People's Convention, a subset of moderates, sidelining the Naga National Council, which was then underground (Bhaumik 2005: 201). The NNC refused to recognize the arrangement.

The Naga National Council refused to recognize the [Sixteen-Point Accord]

Rammohan maintains that three important tenets of counterinsurgency operations were not followed in Nagaland, in his view contributing to the acuteness of the problem (Rammohan 2005: 124–27). The first tenet, he writes, is to find and remove the cause of the insurgency. Since the Naga quest for self-determination did not originally stem from Indian misgovernance, it was not plausible to remove the cause of insurgency. The second is to ensure that counterinsurgency operations do not alienate people. In Nagaland, the regrouping of villages, the use of torture and rough police interrogation, and the failure to involve the judiciary are some of the mistakes he cites (Ibid.: 126). Finally, the lack of accountability in the use of economic development money, as well as corruption, created additional grounds for alienation and insurgency.

Nevertheless, in 1964 a ceasefire agreement was signed between the Indian Government and the Federal Government of Nagaland (FGN) that provided for talks about the independence/integration issue as well as about army atrocities in Nagaland. These talks proved fruitless, but the efforts of the Indian Intelligence Bureau to exploit Naga tribal rivalries did not. The FGN split, and a new militant group called the Revolutionary Government of Nagaland was formed. This latter group finally surrendered in 1973.

The Shillong Accord, 1975

According to Bhaumik, the Shillong Accord marks the nadir of the Naga National Council movement (Bhaumik 2005: 201–02). The Accord was signed by the Governor of Nagaland and "underground organizations"; the NNC was not even named as a signatory. This was indicative of the relative weakening of the NNC and FGN and the strengthening of the Indian position after the creation of Bangladesh. After 1971, Bhaumik

reasons, the Nagas lost their ability to take shelter in East Pakistan, and support from China and Pakistan also declined. These two factors combined to make the Shillong Accord possible. He points out that after the Shillong Accord, which in his view was a "sell-out," the NNC slid gradually into irrelevance and was completely sidelined by the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) (Ibid.: 201).

Under the provisions of the Shillong Accord, representatives of the underground organizations "of their own volition" agreed to surrender and accept "without condition" the Indian Constitution. The modalities of the surrender were to be (and were) determined by a later agreement (signed in 1976). The underground organizations were to have "reasonable time to formulate other issues for discussion for final settlement." There was no comparable undertaking on the part of the Government of India. Bhaumik describes the accord as a victory for India (Ibid.: 219). Naga detractors of the accord described it as a sell-out, and the accord was the death-knell for the NNC and FGN. In Bhaumik's words, "The Shillong Accord marked the end of the most volatile phase of the Naga rebellion, an era when the movement was broad-based, militarily strong, and relatively free from the virus of tribalism" (Ibid.).

In 1980, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland was formed, and it followed a strategy of networking with militant groups of other ethnicities in the region, even as Naga discourse began to speak of Nagalim, or a greater Nagaland area that would include Naga communities outside Nagaland State. In 1997, a unilateral ceasefire by the Isaak Muivah faction of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) against security forces in Nagaland and Manipur States preceded a ceasefire agreement between the Indian Government and the NSCN-IM. The government agreed not to conduct operations against militants, except for patrolling the international and state borders, and the militants agreed not to raid, kill, extort, kidnap, or disrupt normal life in any way. A monitoring group was set up, but it was not effective (Rammohan 2005: 143). In 2000, the Khaplang faction of the NSCN followed suit with its own ceasefire. Since then, peace negotiations have taken place abroad and in New Delhi between the Government of India and various Naga organizations. Violations of the ceasefire and internecine clashes have occurred, but the formal ceasefire has been regularly extended and its terms revised. In 2001, the territorial scope of the ceasefire was extended to include all Naga-inhabited areas of the Northeast. (This caused a violent reaction among the people of Manipur State.)

Meanwhile, networking between extremist groups in Northeast India and outside the region, as well as between these groups and their external supporters, has increased. The challenge now is as much to break these networks as it is to resolve the original disputes. Writing about the ten years of ceasefire and peace talks, Prabhakara identifies three issues that are important to the Nagas: recognition of their unique history a group that has never been ruled by others and has always lived on their own land; territorial integration of all Nagas; and sovereignty (Prabhakara 2005: May 10). In the short run, he suggests that the Nagas will settle for territorial integration, which could be achieved through the Indian Constitution's provisions for redrawing state boundaries. Brahma Chellaney points out that the peace dividend has benefited Nagaland, but there is unanimity among observers that the Indian state has missed many opportunities to make progress on this front (Chellaney 2006; Prabhakara 2006; Rammohan 2005; Bhaumik 2005).

networking between extremist groups in Northeast India...has increased

The Naga peace accords have not addressed the core issues behind the conflict and have tended to reproduce the same discords, as Das has warned can happen with peace accords (Das 2005a: 130). Although the basic issues have remained the same, the status of the signatories has changed (improving with the 1947 accord, worsening with the Shillong Accord), as has the nature of the insurgency. All parties to the conflict have never been signatories at once, and this is true with the present peace process as well, where internecine rivalry is almost as intense as the conflict with the Indian state.

Assam State

Assam is a large, diverse state at the heart of Northeast India; conflict issues in Assam are similar to the range of issues that are contentious across the region, even though the state's population reflects the region's diversity. Grievances include loss of self-determination, Indian colonial attitudes, exploitation and neglect, cultural anxiety, nativism and illegal immigration, citizenship, and irredentism. The State of Assam has been party to several agreements: the 1985 Assam Accord signed after the agitation against foreigners; accords signed with representatives of different Bodo groups; and agreements with specific ethnic groups to set up special

administrative arrangements under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Prior to 1985, however, Assam was also affected by bilateral arrangements between the central government and various ethnic groups in the Northeast, as a result of which territories that were part of Assam State were parceled out as new states or union territories. The formation of Nagaland is one example.

The Assam Accord, 1985

An accord was signed in 1985 by the Union Home Secretary, the Assam Chief Secretary, and representatives of the All-Assam Students Union (AASU) and All-Assam Gana Sangram Parishad (All-Assam Council of People's Movement, or AAGSP) that brought to an end the violent protest against illegal immigration into Assam. Clause 2 paraphrases the chief concern of the AASU and AGSP: "their profound sense of apprehension regarding the continuing influx of foreign nationals into Assam and the fear about adverse effects upon the political, social, cultural and economic life of the State." Fourteen of the twenty substantive provisions deal with the issue of illegal immigration.

The most important question the accord sought to settle was that of the cut-off date for registering as an immigrant. AASU had demanded that all immigrants entering Assam State after 1950 be required to register, but the minority students union had wanted the cut off to be fixed at 1971, the year that Bangladesh had come into existence. The Assam Accord was a compromise that sought both to remedy and prevent this problem of illegal immigrants being able to vote. The main cut-off date was set at 1971, and those entering Assam on or after March 25, 1971, were to be expelled. However, a gray zone was created for those who entered Assam State between January 1, 1966, and March 24, 1971. Those who had immigrated to Assam during this period would have their names struck off the electoral roll and would have to register as foreigners at district registration offices under the Foreigners Act. After ten years had elapsed from the time they were detected as foreigners, their names would be restored to the electoral roll. In addition, the Government of India agreed to take over the issuing of citizenship certificates.

The Assam Accord of 1985 also called for maintenance of birth and death registers in order to track population changes; border patrols to guard against "infiltration"; enforcement of laws against encroachment into tribal areas; and prohibition on the purchase of property in Assam by foreigners. For its part, the AASU and AAGSP called off the agitation

against foreigners and agreed to avail themselves of government amnesties and compensatory schemes, which included a relaxation of the age limit for entering the civil service and *ex gratia* payments to the kin of those killed during the agitation. In addition, the Indian Government guaranteed Assamese cultural rights and promised investment in development and education. Implementation of the Accord was entrusted to the national Union Home Ministry.

The central provisions of the accord proved difficult to implement. Elections followed, and the newly formed Assam People's Council (Asom Gana Parishad, or AGP) came to power. Their poor governance record underscores the lack of implementation of the accord. These factors accounted for the growing influence of the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA). Moreover, a decade of Assamese assertiveness had alienated tribal communities, who began to demand special protections and provisions, repeating a pattern that had occurred previously when Assamese was made the state's official language.

The central provisions of the [Assam] accord proved difficult to implement

Bodo Memorandum of Settlement, 1993

In 1993, in an attempt to settle the Bodo quest for autonomy, the All-Bodo Students Union (ABSU) president and a representative of the Assam Government signed a Memorandum of Settlement in the presence of a minister from the Government of India and the Assam chief minister.

The origins of the Bodo movement lie in the 1967 demand for a state for "plains tribals" in Assam State. This new state would have included all of the Assam districts that had been made part of Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, and Mizoram states when those three were created in 1967 (see Hussain 2000: 4521). The impetus for this separatism came from the adoption in 1960 of Assamese as the official language of Assam. The 1985 Assam Accord revived old concerns, and from 1987 onward, support swelled for the demand for a separate state. Bodos were pressing for equal opportunity and equal cultural recognition with the Assamese. Statehood was the solution they sought (Baruah 1999: 188–89, 193).

The Memorandum of Settlement set up a Bodoland Autonomous Council comprising Bodo-majority villages in three Assam districts on the northern bank of the Brahmaputra River. The question of the territorial

jurisdiction of this body could not be sorted out because it involved agreeing on which villages genuinely had Bodo majority populations. The armed wing of the ABSU, the Bodo Voluntary Force, was supposed to have surrendered. In reality, the signatories to the accord were immediately denounced by those Bodos who were not party to it. By 1996, Bodo activists had revived their demand for a separate state, and violence escalated with the proliferation of militant organizations, including the Bodo Liberation Tigers, which was comprised of former Bodo Voluntary Force members who had surrendered. Non-Bodo settlers were targeted in a campaign that Baruah likens to ethnic cleansing, in which not only did non-Bodos become targets of violent acts (Baruah 1999: 194–96), but Bodos from other factions were also targeted (Hussain 2000: 4522). The violence took the form of riots, massacres, assassinations, and arson that forced survivors from their homes and made them reluctant to return.

Non-Bodo settlers were targeted in [an ethnic cleansing] campaign

Rabha-Hasong, Karbi Anglong, Tiwa, and Mishing Autonomous District Agreements of 1995

One of the great fears generated by demands for autonomy is that they snowball; a state cannot grant greater autonomy to one segment of its citizenry without coming under pressure to do so with others. Thus the 1993 Bodo settlement was followed by similar demands and similar accords that further altered the administrative map of Assam State.

In 1995, the Assam Government created autonomous councils for the Rabhas, Tiwas, and Mishings, which according to Verghese was a preemptive measure (Verghese 2004: 68). These autonomous council areas differ from the Bodoland Autonomous Council in that they are defined by the majority principle rather than territorial contiguity. Any village that has a Rabha, Tiwa, or Mishing majority is included in the respective council. The Rabhas demanded an autonomous state, Rabha Hasong, within Assam State located on the south bank of the Brahmaputra. In addition, they demanded an autonomous district in Darrang District, autonomous councils in districts with Rabha enclaves, Rabha village councils, designated seats in the Bodoland executive council, and language and educational rights. A March 1995 Memorandum of Settlement signed by the Assam State Government and Rabha groups established a Rabha Hasong Autonomous Council made up of discontinuous Rabha Hasong Village

Councils, which were to be included in some instances after consultation with other administrative agencies.

The accord with the Tiwas followed. A two-tiered arrangement was set up: the Autonomous Lalung (Tiwa) District Demand Committee covers Tiwa-majority villages, and the Tiwa Autonomous Council covers Tiwas in other villages. That these structures correspond to low tiers of the Indian administrative system is one source of Tiwa frustration; another is that the accord does not go far enough to recognize Tiwa distinctiveness. Verghese mentions dissatisfaction on the part of the Tiwa Literary Society (*Tiwa Sahitya Sabha*), whose views were not taken into account when the accord was announced, and on the part of the (Tiwa) Autonomous State Struggle Committee, which was not part of the negotiations. Like the Tiwas, the Rabhas and the Mishings, who signed a similar accord in June 1995, rue the lack of a contiguous territorial corridor identified with them (Verghese 2004: 69–72).

An April 1995 Memorandum of Understanding expanded the scope of the Karbi Anglong District Council's powers, renaming it the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council. This was part of a process that began soon after Indian independence. The Sixth Schedule provided for a United Mikir and North Cachar Hills District. In 1976, these were bifurcated, and the Mikir Hills District was renamed Karbi Anglong.

Memorandum of Settlement Establishing a Bodoland Territorial Council, 2003

A unilateral ceasefire by the Bodo Liberation Tigers in 1999 set in motion a peace process that culminated in 2003 with the signing of the Memorandum of Settlement establishing a Bodoland Territorial Council by the Government of India, the Assam State Government, and the Bodo Liberation Tigers. The memorandum falls far short of creating a Bodo state, but provides for an autonomous Bodoland Territorial District that covers Kokrajhar, Udalguri, Baska, and Chirang Districts, and includes cultural protections (e.g., protection of the Bodo language). The explanation of the Bodoland Territorial Council of this process is worth quoting:

> After years of struggle, the BLT [Bodo Liberation Tigers] unilaterally decided to suspend its armed operations on July 14, 1999 and agreed to negotiate with the Government of India. This is an example to other underground groups in the region. *Those seeking to improve the lives of their people through armed struggles should realize that this path cannot suc-*

ceed. The conditions of people can be best improved in times of peace, leading to stability and development. (bodolandcouncil.org/aboutus.htm; emphasis added)

Mizoram State

The Mizo insurgency was largely a consequence of two factors. First, like many communities in Northeast India, Mizos felt alienated by Assamese ethnic domination. In response to Assamese dominance, the Eastern India Tribal Union was formed in 1957 and sought separation from an ethnically defined Assam State. Mizo politics had initially focused equally on the question of internal change (e.g., the abolition of the chieftainship) and possible union with Burma or independence for Mizos spread across three countries (Verghese 2004: 138–41). With integration into India fait accompli, the United Mizo Freedom Organization joined the Eastern India Tribal Union. The second factor that spurred Mizo insurgency was the calamitous famine that followed the 1959 flowering of the bamboo across Mizoram State. In spite of warnings of a resulting rise in the rodent population and destruction of crops, the Assam State Government did not take any measures to prevent or alleviate hardship caused by the flowering. The demand for Mizo statehood followed: organizing relief for the famine-affected population was a natural precursor to ethnonationalist mobilization.

Mizos felt alienated by Assamese ethnic domination

The Mizo Accord, 1986

The Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Government of India, the Chief Secretary of Mizoram, and Mizo National Front leader Laldenga ended the Mizo insurgency. The Mizo National Front (MNF) and its affiliates renounced violence and secession, as well as their links to the Tripura National Volunteers and the People's Liberation Army (Manipur). In return, Mizoram became a state, and the MNF entered mainstream politics, with Laldenga becoming chief minister. Border trade would be facilitated with Bangladesh and Myanmar. Special provisions protecting Mizo customs and ownership and transfer of land were also included in the Indian Constitution.

It is commonly believed that the Mizo Accord has been uniquely successful in returning the community to peace. Because it has significance beyond the region, this success is worth analyzing. Analysts base their explanations in Mizo colonial experience, Mizo identity formation, the nature of political mobilization, specific characteristics of the negotiations, and state-society relations in postaccord Mizoram.

First, Mizoram's experience as a British colony facilitated societal changes of long-term consequence. Unlike elsewhere, the colonial administration did not distance itself from local society, instead using missionaries to effect the social change it needed to legitimize its presence (Hassan 2006: 28). The administration also chose and backed one section of society, the Sailos, to undermine the political authority of the traditional chieftains. As commoners were empowered, they in turn backed the modernizing and reformist state against their traditional chieftains. The new Mizo leadership tried to forge a more inclusive identity, which has been identified as another important factor in Mizoram's sustainable peace (Hassan 2006: 15).

Second, the construction of an inclusive, generic Mizo identity that brought into its fold all the communities in the Mizoram area is repeatedly described by scholars as enabling a unity of purpose in both war and peace (Nag 2006; Hassan 2006: 5). The term "Mizo" means "man of the hills" and therefore lacks any single ethnic marker, making it possible to integrate both Lushai and non-Lushai speaking communities into one united political voice (Hassan 2006: 18).

construction of an inclusive, generic Mizo identity [enabled]...a unity of purpose

Third, the Mizo leadership thus was able to mobilize all sections and echelons of society in the Lushai Hills (Nag 2006). Hassan describes this as the "overpowering legacy of the Mizo Union, which had turned political alliance-making into a basic tenet of its policy" (Hassan 2006: 26). Even during the struggle, the Mizo National Front's activities stopped short of "reducing an ideological battle into a simple law and order problem" (Nag 2006).

Fourth, during the final rounds of negotiations, both sides displayed an attitude of give and take. The Mizo National Front gave up its demand

for a Greater Mizoram (Ibid.). Using Mizoram as an illustration, Satapathy discusses the value of "insider-partial" mediators in conflict resolution. In the case of Mizoram, Mizo community leaders were themselves engaged in brokering peace between Mizo rebel groups and the India state. Trust rather than distance is the hallmark of such mediation, and because mediators remain part of the postaccord scenario, they are also accountable to the conflict parties for the consequences of the peace they broker. Satapathy's narrative of the Mizo conflict identifies several attempts by insider-partials to further negotiations: Reverend Zairema in 1968, a section of the MNF leadership in 1973, the chief minister of Mizoram and several civil society organizations in 1974, and then the Mizoram Congress led by Lalthanhawla in 1986. Laldenga's demand that the MNF should control the government in a postaccord Mizoram was met by Lalthanhawla's rare and singular gesture of resigning his position as chief minister to accept the deputy's position in a coalition government (Bhattacharjee 2006; Verghese 2004). However, it should be noted that the MNF leaders have abided by subsequent electoral verdicts even when they have lost the elections.

Pudaite writes that at the time of the accord, "insurgency was no longer feasible as a political strategy in Mizoram" (Pudaite 2006). In other words, the conflict was ripe for resolution. Although parts of the accord still have not been implemented, the same public support that allowed former militants to be reintegrated into society has sustained peace. Some of this sustained support for peace has to do with the nonantagonistic relationship in Mizoram between the state and civil society organizations.

Finally, a close collaborative working relationship between the Mizoram State Government and civil society organizations has enhanced state capacity while preventing a breakdown of the postaccord order (Hassan 2006: 2, 28–29). This relationship has made the state more responsive than it might have been, and Hassan offers as an illustration the fact that in both the Hmar and Bru cases (described below), the Mizoram State Government rather than the Government of India initiated negotiations and the formation of autonomous councils (Ibid.: 25–26). Moreover, Hassan states, Mizoram's many communities are by and large better represented in state agencies than is normally the case. This is a consequence of the nature of Mizo identity formation and political mobilization over the last fifty years. Groups that fall outside the "Mizo" rubric have autonomous

development councils in which they enjoy varying degrees of control over their resources, customary law, and medium of instruction.

Notwithstanding all these positive traits, Sajal Nag wrote in 2006 that the culture of the Mizos was beginning to dominate others in the coalition that made up the Mizo movement, leading them to revolt and undermining what has made postconflict Mizoram peaceful. The necessity for the accords with the Hmars and Brus illustrates this change.

Memorandum of Settlement between the Government of Mizoram and the Hmar People's Convention, 1994

The Mizo Accord left out the demand for a Greater Mizoram that would have integrated Hmar areas in Manipur State within Mizoram. This disappointment led to the formation of the Hmar People's Convention (HPC) in 1986 to demand an autonomous self-governing area in north and northeast Mizoram. Violent clashes followed and the HPC networked with Naga groups to coordinate raids (Dena 2002). Nine rounds of talks between 1992 and 1994 yielded a Memorandum of Settlement between the Mizoram State Government and the HPC.

The memorandum provided for the establishment of the Sinlung Hills Development Council, the jurisdiction of which would be demarcated by mutual consultation by the signatories. This area and others would be brought under the purview of the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution. Cultural rights and protections were provided for. In return, the Hmar People's Convention agreed to give up arms, sever ties with other militant groups like the National Socialist Council of Nagaland and the United Liberation Front of Assam, and help restore normalcy.

The politics of demarcation delayed the implementation of the Memorandum of Settlement, and the HPC split over this question. The HPC (Democracy) is now demanding the formation of a Hmar homeland in Mizoram. In the meantime, the Sinlung Hills Development Council has come into existence, albeit with less autonomy than other autonomous district councils might have (Hassan 2006: 25).

Memorandum of Understanding with the Bru National Liberation Front, 2005

After thirteen rounds of talks, Surjya Moni Reang and Solomon Prophul Ushoy of the Bru National Liberation Front (BNLF) signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Mizoram State Government in

April 2005. The Mizoram State government agreed to repatriate genuine Bru refugees living in camps in Tripura State. They also agreed to change the name "Reang" to "Bru" in the Mizoram list of scheduled tribes.[4] The BNLF agreed to lay down arms and come out from underground (*Telegraph* [Kolkata], April 27, 2005). It was further reported that Surjya Moni Reang apologized for any BNLF atrocities against the Mizo and Bru/Reang people.

The Mizoram...government agreed to repatriate genuine Bru refugees

Seeking to protect the rights and dignity of their ethnic group, Bru/Reang organizations have sought an autonomous district council or regional council and repatriation of Bru/Reang who were displaced after 1997 Mizo attacks on their settlements following the initial demand for a Bru/Reang homeland within Mizoram State (Bru National Liberation Front 2001). The accord has not resolved the conflict because another interlocutor in the last rounds of talks, the Bru Liberation Front of Mizoram, has not endorsed it. Now, the BNLF and the Mizoram State Government disagree as to whether the Memorandum of Understanding was an agreement between the Bru/Reang and Mizo communities (the BNLF's stand) or between the BNLF and Mizoram State Government (the government stand). (Newslink, February 6, 2006).

Tripura State

Loss of lands and livelihoods to immigrants first gave rise to the Tripura Upajati Juba Samiti (Tripura Tribal Youth Committee, or TUJS) and then to the Tripura National Volunteers (TNV). The TUJS demanded an autonomous district under the Sixth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, adoption of Kok Borok as the official language, and the restoration of alienated land. By 1970, the appeal of armed resistance led to the formation of the Tripura National Volunteers. Seeking strength through networking, the TNV built ties to the Mizo National Front. When the MNF surrendered in 1986, the TNV was not able to survive on its own.

In order to address the concerns of Tripura's tribal communities, the Tripura legislature resolved in 1979 to set up an autonomous district council to represent the interests of all these communities. The ethnic majority Bengalis in Tripura State opposed this resolution, arguing that such a council would cover three-fourths of the state territory but serve the interests of

only one-fourth of its population (Verghese 2004: 174). The Bengali's also worried about their language being sidelined in the educational system. A banned militant organization, Amra Bangali, was revived in 1978. There were riots in June 1980. Notwithstanding all this, the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Councils (TTAADC) Act established the autonomous district councils in January 1982, and a 1985 constitutional amendment brought the TTAADC into the ambit of the Sixth Schedule.

Memorandum of Understanding with the Tripura National Volunteers, 1988

Also described as the Rajiv Gandhi-Bijoy Hrangkhawl Agreement (Ganguly 2000), the Memorandum of Understanding with the Tripura National Volunteers was signed in New Delhi by Hrangkhawl and five other members of the TNV, representatives of the Government of India, and the Tripura State Government. The MOU provided for the restoration of tribal lands and the prevention of further alienation of land to immigrants, mainly generations of Bengali settlers. The government also committed to securing the borders against illegal immigration. The Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council was to be reorganized to include tribal areas but exclude nontribal areas—an important demand for many of the tribal militant groups—effectively creating two states within one state. One-third of the seats in the state legislature were to be reserved for tribals. TNV activists surrendered as part of the agreement.

Between 1988 and 1992, Tripura was relatively peaceful (Ganguly 2000). Discontent arose within the TNV about the signing of the accord; some dissenters formed the National Liberation Front of Tripura in 1989, and others formed the All-Tripura Tribal Force in 1990. The All-Tripura Tiger Force split from the All-Tripura Tribal Force in 1992 and was responsible for ratcheting up the level of violence. The signatories to the MOU have maintained active vigil to ensure its implementation, using more traditional methods of civil disobedience, and have been reasonably successful.

Memorandum of Settlement with the All-Tripura Tiger Force (the Agartala Agreement), 1993

A section of the All-Tripura Tiger Force led by Lalit Debbarma and his followers signed a Memorandum of Settlement in 1993 with the Tripura State Government (also known as the Agartala Agreement) (Sahni n.d.), after which, according to the Tripura Police website, 1,633 All-Tripura Tribal Force militants surrendered to the government (http://tripurapo-

lice.nic.in/amilitancy.htm). In turn, the state government reiterated its 1988 commitment to reorganizing the TTAADC (Verghese 2004: 180). The Agartala Agreement also provides cultural safeguards for Tripuras, which range from the setting up of a cultural development center in the TTAADC area to restoring traditional tribal place names, language development, and the codification of tribal laws (Ibid.: 184).

The 1988 MOU with the TNV and 1993 Agartala Agreement represent two deals struck with two players in a field where disbanded organizations regroup in a phoenix-like fashion and new organizations take shape with ease. The All-Tripura Tiger Force is still active, and both the All-Tripura Tribal Force and the National Liberation Front of Tripura, which are the two dominant militant groups in this state, operate with camps in Bangladesh.

Moreover, observers of Tripura politics suggest that this situation is different than others in Northeast India. Praveen Kumar characterizes insurgent activity in Tripura as having "no coherent idea of Tripuri subnationalism." Tribals themselves are targets of much of the violence generated by defenders of tribal rights (Praveen Kumar n.d.; Dasgupta 2001). The reports of confessions by surrendered extremists lead Mahadey Chakravarti to suggest that not the attraction of fixed goals, but rather a fear psychosis ("fear of submergence of the tribal culture and ethos within the dominant nontribal culture") and a lack of economic opportunity bred insurgency (Chakravarti 2001). He adds that "the disunity and clash between different insurgent groups in Tripura were due to the scramble for gains, the wrangle for snatching power and ascendancy and extending the area of operation." And according to Anindita Dasgupta, "For these failed revolutionaries of Tripura, the shift from ethnic insurgency to criminality was fast, easy and lucrative" (Dasgupta 2001). To this Bibhu Prasad Routray adds, "A deep political nexus with terror has created critical power centers within Tripura, which are too strong to be broken by seemingly hardening political postures against terrorist violence" (Routray 2003).

[In Tripura,] "the shift from ethnic insurgency to criminality was fast..."

Gorkhaland

Darjeeling Hill Accord, 1988

Following violent demonstrations, representatives of the Gorkhaland National Liberation Front (GNLF), the West Bengal State Government, and the Government of India signed an accord in 1988 whereby the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) was formed with Darjeeling, Kalimpong, Kurseong, and parts of Siliguri. Following several decades of seeking cultural recognition, the GNLF began to demand statehood, but it dropped this demand as part of the compromise that became the Darjeeling Hill Accord. The accord effectively recognized "Gorkha" as the identity of Nepalese living in India and acknowledged their citizenship (Verghese 2004: 274). However, in 1992, Nepali and not Gorkhali was listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which lists India's languages and serves as a barometer of official cultural recognition. The accord was reasonably successful in halting the violence but did not entirely meet the aspirations of the Gorkhas.

Although the GNLF dropped agitation for statehood, the demand for it still remains in Gorkha political discourse. Administrative issues remain unclear; for example, is the DGHC a state or a district, and how does the DGHC relate to the district administration?

Reading Maps, Seeking Directions

The preceding thirteen cases provide a large enough data set for several kinds of comparative analysis to be done. This section examines the peace accords in greater detail, using seven criteria to ascertain what can be learned from this six-decade-long political experiment with mixed results. These seven criteria are:

1. The nature of the peace process
2. The scope of the accord
3. Unresolved issues and conflicts
4. Conflict that can be considered a consequence of accords
5. Redistribution of authority as a conflict management device
6. A comparison of Mizoram and Tripura States
7. The relationship between state building and accord making

Nature of the Peace Process

The accords that have been most effective were preceded by thoughtful, consultative, and sustained peace processes. The Mizo Accord is considered one of the most successful, and like the other two accords associated with the State of Mizoram, it was reached in the context of a peace process. Less successful accords that were also preceded by consultation, negotiation, and communication of the demands of the various sides were the 1985 Assam Accord, the Darjeeling Hill Accord, and the Sixteen-Point Agreement with the Naga People's Convention. In the case of the Darjeeling Hill Accord, the State of West Bengal and the central government were initially at cross-purposes, but the need to end the violent agitation led by the Gorkhaland National Liberation Front was urgent enough to bring all parties to the peace table. In these six cases, negotiations took two or three years. The Naga People's Convention met three years in a row to arrive at its list of sixteen demands. The Mizoram State Government held nine rounds of talks with the Hmar People's Convention and thirteen with the Bru National Liberation Front.

The reasons why the Shillong Accord, the Bodo Accords, and the two agreements signed by the Tripura State Government were not as successful varied. After the Shillong Accord, the Naga National Council lost all credibility, and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland emerged as the most powerful Naga player. After signing the Memorandum of Settlement with the Assam State Government, the All-Bodo Students Union was supposed to disarm, but part of its armed wing went on to form the Bodo Liberation Tigers. This suggests that there was no consensus within the ABSU, let alone within the wider Bodo community, in favor of the accord. One faction of the Tripura National Volunteers signed the 1988 Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of India and the Tripura State Government, following which dissenters formed two organizations, the National Liberation Front of Tripura, and what became the All-Tripura Tiger Force. Both insurgent groups are still active, notwithstanding the fact that a section of the All-Tripura Tiger Force was a signatory to the Agartala Agreement in 1993. The Sixteen-Point Agreement, which was signed with the Naga People's Convention but not the Naga National Council, also conforms to this pattern of leaving out stakeholders.

The nature of the peace process affects prospects for implementation of accords. In many cases, it appears that the viability of the terms of the

accord has not been thought through systematically. The Assam Accord, which addressed the issue of illegal immigration, was a one-issue accord, and it was signed after several rounds of talks. However, its most important provisions relating to that one issue, such as the process for detecting and deporting foreigners, proved impossible to implement. The Bodo Autonomous Council's jurisdiction was to be delimited on the basis of population, but determining ethnicity and domicile in a given area proved to be difficult. Even as the provisions were being worked out, Bodo organizations were conducting the equivalent of an ethnic cleansing campaign in villages they wanted to claim (Baruah 1999: 193).

The nature of the peace process affects prospects for implementation of accords

Scope of Accords

The two most common components of peace accords in Northeast India are provisions guaranteeing cultural rights and ceasefire provisions whereby militant groups agree to lay down arms and the state promises rehabilitation assistance. In more recent accords, the ceasefire also has included a promise by insurgents to sever ties with other armed groups, a sign of the increasing levels of violence in the region and of the growing salience of networks in spreading militancy. Nor are the surrender and disarmament always foolproof. Another challenge to the success of accords in the Northeast is that cultural provisions are not implemented seriously; nor for that matter are they unproblematic, as the granting of special rights to one group frequently undermines another's. Nevertheless, these types of provisions are included in most of the accords.

Most accords in the mapping above set up territorial or nonterritorial representative arrangements. The full range of autonomous council arrangements are on display in this region: from nonterritorial councils in the Bru/Reang, Rabha, Mishing, and Tiwa accords, to the Sinlung Hills Development Council, to the Karbi Anglong District Council established according to the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. Only two accords created states—the Sixteen-Point Accord that created the State of Nagaland and the Mizo Accord creating the State of Mizoram. Typically, the territorial arrangement stipulated in the accord falls far short of the insurgent group's original demand. Moreover, implementation of a territorial arrangement is difficult, as the 1993 Bodo Accord showed. Very few eth-

nic groups live in a single concentrated area. Those groups that are concentrated have been provided for and have their own states or "Sixth Schedule" districts. Therefore, creating a territorial space involves delicate issues of redistricting and disenfranchising other groups.

In addition, accords sometimes promise constitutional or statutory recognition of some sort. An Article 371 amendment followed the signing of the Mizo Accord. Article 371 consists of a cluster of provisions within the Indian Constitution that recognize special autonomy arrangements in states on a case by case basis. The MOU with the Brus, for example, promised to change their scheduled tribe listing from "Reang" to "Bru."

In spite of illegal immigration and demographic change being a concern in the politics of every part of this region, only one accord is focused on this issue—the 1985 Assam Accord. The frontier location of the region is acknowledged in two other accords. The Mizo Accord promised to promote Indo-Burma border trade, and the 1988 MOU with the Tripura National Volunteers acknowledges the need to better secure the international frontier.

Unresolved Issues and Conflicts

Every accord leaves out more issues than it covers: for every issue for which parties seek resolution through an accord, several others remain unresolved. First, it is intrinsic to the process of negotiation that both sides move away from their original positions in order to achieve a compromise. In addition, in the course of negotiations they might choose to focus on a set of issues of common concern, leaving other important questions unresolved. Moreover, the problem in the case of accords, as noted, is that they usually leave out important stakeholders. But even if important stakeholders are part of a consultative process, sometimes they are not signatories to the final version of an accord. Inadequacies of the process and problems of implementation make almost every accord unsatisfactory.

accords...leave out important stakeholders

In the state-by-state mapping of accords, three states were not discussed—Sikkim, Meghalaya, and Manipur. Of these, Sikkim is the most peaceful. Meghalaya is home to three constitutionally provided autonomous district councils—Khasi Hills, Jaintia Hills, and Garo Hills Autonomous District Councils. But Manipur, where no accords have been signed, has seen some of the worst violence in the last decade.

Multiple discontents have marked Manipur's post-1947 politics. First, the princely state of Manipur's 1949 merger with India was challenged (Verghese 2004: 115–28). Two significant events in 1947 seemed to work at cross-purposes: the king of Manipur signed an Instrument of Accession with India, and a new Manipur Constitution was adopted that limited the powers of the monarchy and allowed for universal adult suffrage. The 1949 merger agreement signed by the king therefore had questionable validity, as his right to make that decision was challenged. Furthermore, Manipur was relegated to the third echelon of units in the Indian Union and became a Union Territory only in 1956. Manipuri was included in the Eighth Schedule only in 1992. From the Manipuri point of view, merging with India did not improve the lives of Manipuris in any way. Other grievances, found elsewhere in Northeast India, grew: Meiteis, whose culture is identified as the Manipuri mainstream and who constituted the majority in Manipur and occupied a tenth of its land, could not buy land in the hills areas, but hill tribes and outsiders could buy land in the plains (South Asia Terrorism Portal 2001). Because Meiteis are not a scheduled tribe, their access to public sector employment opportunities was limited relative to that of the hill tribes, who ended up overrepresented in government.

Meiteis responded in two ways to this situation (Verghese 2004: 117). Cultural revivalism, including a return to the original Sanamahi faith, was one. Out of this strand came also the use of the word "Kanglaipak" for Manipur and the demand that the Kangla fort should be evacuated by Indian forces and returned to the Manipuri people. The latter demand was finally met on November 20, 2004, but not before dramatically staged protests drew attention to local hostility to the presence of the paramilitary Assam Rifles in the area. The long-standing Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), which has been in effect since 1980, is another grievance; beyond the intimidating presence of armed forces in the region, it also empowers officers to act without the normal restraints of warrants and permissions.

The second strand of responses by the Meiteis has involved insurgency. Manipur has seen a succession of militant groups, whose visions range from an independent Manipur nation-state to a pan-Mongoloid identity. These groups have built linkages with other groups across Northeast India and Myanmar. Counterinsurgency operations rather than peace initiatives characterize the state's way of handling Manipuri insurgents.

Manipur's location at the crossroads of four areas with active militant organizations—Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram, and Myanmar—and the fact that communities within Manipur are also found in these other places, further contributes to the level of violence in the state. Clashes between Naga and Kuki groups, between Pangals and Meiteis, and between Kukis and Tamils in Moreh have occurred over the last decade, and the Hmar continue to demand to become part of Mizoram. In spite of this, in close to half a century of conflict no accords have been reached. What are reported as peace efforts are simply civil society initiatives in recent years to protest the AFSPA and army atrocities.

This is not to say that efforts to end conflict are no longer being pursued anywhere. Talks, and talks about talks, with two of the largest militant organizations in Northeast India—ULFA and NSCN-IM continue. As with Manipur, it is surprising that in two decades there has not been even one point of accord between ULFA and the state or national government. The United Liberation Front of Assam was founded in April 1979, the same year that the All-Assam Students Union launched its movement against "foreigners"; but from the beginning, ULFA had a different politics and a different trajectory toward a different vision. ULFA was founded by a small group of young men of a belief that the aims of the Assam Agitation were too limited and a more militant approach was needed to advocate Assam's interests. Where the AASU essentially wanted to secure the rights and cultural identity of ethnic Assamese within the Indian Union, and its rhetoric was directed against illegal immigrants and, by extension, all immigrants into Assam, ULFA's vision of a sovereign Assam was that of a political rather than ethnically ascriptive community of people living in Assam. ULFA's focus is regional rather than ethnolinguistic; however, many of its initiatives have reinforced Assamese customs and culture—especially in opposition to those coming from New Delhi. ULFA's campaign for a sovereign Assam is accompanied by a sociopolitical agenda, and the group is accused of extorting money to fund its activities. Tea companies in Assam have been singularly vulnerable and have given in easily to ULFA's demands.

At the outset, however, ULFA's members were also active in the Assam movement, and the organization itself had a low profile. To date, its association with the movement's successor party, the Assam People's Council (Asom Gana Parishad), continues (Baruah 2005: 165–66). After the Assam Accord was signed in 1985, this association allowed ULFA to con-

tinue mobilizing and carrying out its activities. As power corrupted the AGP and power politics claimed one AGP leader after another, ULFA continued to gain in strength. It was hard for the AGP to restrain ULFA, and as Baruah points out, this meant that the task of dealing with the organization was left to the central government (Ibid.: 168), perpetuating the Assam versus center dynamic that was the basis of ULFA's politics.

At the end of 1990, the central government took over the Assam State administration and a major counterinsurgency operation was launched; fresh state-wide elections were held in 1991. They returned an Indian National Congress government that used both political and military means to deal with ULFA. In January 1992, a subset of the ULFA leadership sought a negotiated settlement (but the sides could not reach an accord), and with government encouragement, several ULFA members surrendered and availed themselves of reintegration assistance programs in 1992 and 1998. These members have come to be known as Surrendered ULFA, or SULFA, and have worked with the government in its counterinsurgency campaign. Inevitably, then, one element in the continuing violence in Assam has been the targeting of SULFA by ULFA. The presence in society of a large group of persons accustomed to using coercion to get their way has its own negative consequences—not just for politics but for society. Inevitably, the demobilized but still armed former militants function as a new mafia, underscoring the crime-terror-politics connection that is now seen in other contexts where conflict has continued for many years (see Sahni and Routray n.d.: 9).

Over the years, ULFA has networked with other militant groups and intelligence establishments for arms, training, and safe havens (see Hazarika 1995: 167–236). These networks, which are facilitated by porous interstate borders, combined with the heavy presence of the state's coercive apparatus in the region and continuing migration, ensure that neither Assam nor any other part of Northeast India can expect the region's politics and economics to be read outside a security framework for many years to come.

ULFA has networked with other militant groups

This brings us to the question that Das highlighted in his 2005 essay on peace accords (Das 2005a: 124–28). What is it that makes some state organs "potential accord-makers" and others not? Das distinguishes

between groups the state recognizes as naturally part of its fabric and those it does not. The government then regards each group differently: the first as citizens and the second as subjects (he cites Mamdani 1997). For those it considers subjects, the state expects acquiescence in return for playing a trusteeship role for them.

That New Delhi views Manipur and its diverse communities as subjects might explain the lack of responsiveness to their views, but it still does not explain the failure to end ULFA's violent run. For ordinary people living in Northeast India, these failures must reinforce the alienation from the very state structures that insist they are of utility to citizens.

Conflict as a Consequence of Accords

In several of the cases discussed here, rather than putting an end to conflict, signing an accord has simply been the prelude to a new phase of the conflict—or even has precipitated a new conflict. This can occur in three ways.

First, as noted, it is possible, even highly probable, that some parties to a conflict or some stakeholders are left out of negotiations and, therefore, are not signatories to the accord. Being part of a peace process itself constitutes one level of recognition, and this is evident in the many debates witnessed in conflict contexts about which organization's leadership the government should be talking to. Getting to the peace table involves compromises and concessions, but being left out of the peace process further alienates excluded groups, not just from the state but also from others who were chosen to negotiate. On the other hand, since each organization generally claims to speak for an entire community, organizations that end up being included in the peace process would prefer to keep the talks exclusive. This in itself can be a strategy on the part of the state.

For example, negotiations leading up to each Naga accord left out important players. The minority within the Naga National Council that went on to raise an army rejected the Nine-Point Agreement in 1947. The Sixteen-Point Agreement in 1960 sidelined the Naga National Council, which was then underground. The Shillong Accord merely listed "underground organizations" without specifying any of them, and within months the National Socialist Council of Nagaland had superseded the Naga National Council in influence. The current peace process involves the NSCN-IM, but other factions are active outside the peace process, and the question of whom to include and how remains relevant even as progress is made.

Negotiations for the 2003 agreement with the Bodo Liberation Tigers did not include the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB), which was consequently not party to the signed memorandum. The NDFB, founded in 1986, was both politically and militarily the stronger organization and remained active until 2005, when it declared a ceasefire. Its exclusion from the 2003 accord and the likelihood of future negotiations makes the Bodoland Territorial Council (BTC) memorandum something of an interim document. Who should participate in talks with the NDFB is also going to be an issue, and one that complicates the agenda problem. The All-India Bodo Students Union has argued that it and the BTC should be included in the talks (Laishram 2005). The Sanmilita Janagosthiya Sangram Samity, which is an apex body of non-Bodo organizations in Assam, has opposed the BTC memorandum and insists on being a part of the negotiations with the NDFB when they take place (*Assam Tribune* 2004). Rani Pathak points out that having signed an accord with one organization, the government is in an awkward position because further negotiations will mean further concessions, which will place the more militant organization that is not part of the accord in a stronger position locally (Pathak 2006; see also W. Hussain 2004).

The Tiwa Memorandum of Understanding is similarly problematic because the Tiwa Literary Society and the All-Tiwa Students Union were asked to be part of consultations, but when the final accord was signed, neither of these organizations nor the Tiwa Autonomous State Struggle Committee were involved (Verghese 2004: 70). Recently, Tiwa organizations have begun demanding that the Assam State Government upgrade their autonomous council to a territorial one (i.e., specific areas would be recognized as "Tiwa" and fall under the jurisdiction of the council).

The Mizo Accord, as noted, is considered the most successful of all the peace accords in Northeast India. This has been attributed in part to the nature of Mizo identity construction, which was inclusive and denoted a common geographical location rather than ethnic kinship. The idea of a greater Mizoram was one uniting factor. However, the Mizo Accord became possible because the MNF gave up this demand, and the resulting accord therefore overlooked the aspirations of many non-Lushai groups (i.e., of those who consider themselves Mizo but are not part of the ethnic-majority Mizo Lushai) that had been part of the Mizo rubric. Subsequently, Mizoram has faced demands from Brus and Hmars for autonomous district or regional councils.

The three initiatives taken by the Tripura State Government to resolve conflict are similarly limited. The move to create a Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Council addressed one set of concerns—those of the state's tribal communities as opposed to the Bengali settler majority. The two accords that followed were each signed with one militant group among many, dissenting segments of which soon formed another organization. It is easier to enumerate the accords than to enumerate who was left out of their negotiations; however, where observers have shown categorically that profit and not ideology motivate insurgency-like operations (Praveen Kumar n.d.: 6; Dasgupta 2001), it is in any case unlikely that such organizations would show any interest in peace negotiations.

In fact, the propensity for dissenters to go underground and start another organization as the signatories surrender and disband is visible across the board and is the second way in which accords seem to increase rather than reduce conflict. It would even appear that among militant organizations, signing an accord lowers the influence of the signatory. Division and increased violence followed the first two Naga accords, but the Shillong Accord had the effect of completely discrediting the Naga National Council and facilitated the rise of the NSCN. The failure to implement the 1985 Assam Accord and the governance failures of the Assam People's Council lent credibility to the United Liberation Front of Assam, for whom the accord had not gone far enough anyway. The All-Bodo Students Union signed its first Memorandum of Settlement with the Assam State Government in 1993, but a segment of its armed wing, the Bodo Volunteer Force, denounced the signatories and within three years formed the Bodo Liberation Tigers. The 1988 Tripura accord prompted a split in the Tripura National Volunteers, with the dissenters forming the National Liberation Front of Tripura, which continues to be active.

Third, sometimes the terms of an accord create new problems. For example, problems can arise from the exclusion or sidelining of particular interests. The 2001 extension of the ceasefire with the NSCN-IM to all Naga-inhabited areas created a violent reaction in Manipur State. This provision was read as a prelude to recognition of the Nagalim (Greater Nagaland) demand, which lays claim to parts of Manipur. The 1985 Assam Accord focused on one issue, illegal immigration, which affects Assamese and non-Assamese alike. However, its cultural provisions all centered on the protection and promotion of Assamese. This raised the stakes for Bodos and other plains tribes in Assam, all of whom have been trying

to secure autonomous districts for themselves. The Mizo National Front gave up the demand for a Greater Mizoram union, but when it did so it overlooked the interests of many non-Lushai groups. Implementation comes with its own challenges and can generate insecurity for those who are affected.

the terms of an accord [can] create new problems

Accords also have a "demonstration effect," which is best illustrated by the Bodo accords. The Bodo Autonomous Council accord of 1993 was followed very soon by similar accords with the Rabhas, Mishings, Tiwas, and Karbis to set up nonterritorial councils to accommodate their dispersed communities. The Bodo Autonomous Council was still-born because it proved so difficult to demarcate its jurisdiction. However, in 2003 a fresh accord created a Bodo Territorial Council, which has prompted Tiwa organizations to work in unison to demand the same for themselves.

Redistributing Authority to Resolve Conflict

Authority within a state is distributed through nonterritorial and territorial arrangements. Redrawing maps to manage or resolve conflict is an old political device, and mobilization that combines demands for land and language in its platform almost always succeeds in altering the distribution of authority within a polity (Bukowski and Rajagopalan 2000: 170–72). This has been the primary device used by ethnic groups in Northeast India as well, where the struggle for self-determination is expressed in terms of separatism, irredentism, and nativism.

The Indian Constitution lends itself easily to changes in the shape, size, name, and status of its constituent parts through parliamentary legislation, requiring merely that when a change affects another state, it should be referred to that state for its views. The simplest ordering of the territorial units in the Indian Union is depicted in the illustration in figure 1, and the more complex reality in figure 2.

For an ethnic group in the Indian Union, three kinds of recognition are possible. The first is cultural recognition by inclusion of their language in the Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution, which lists India's national languages. This carries symbolic rather than material value. Second, recognition as a Scheduled Caste or Tribe is an acknowledgement of previous oppression and present disadvantage and carries with it access to special quotas for education and employment. The third type is recog-

Figure 1. The basic tiers of the Indian administrative system

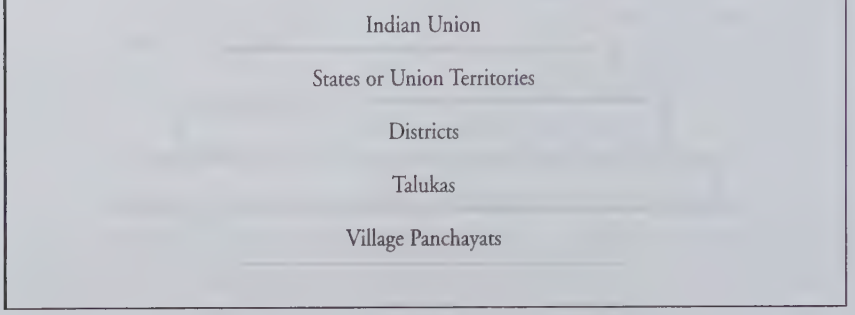
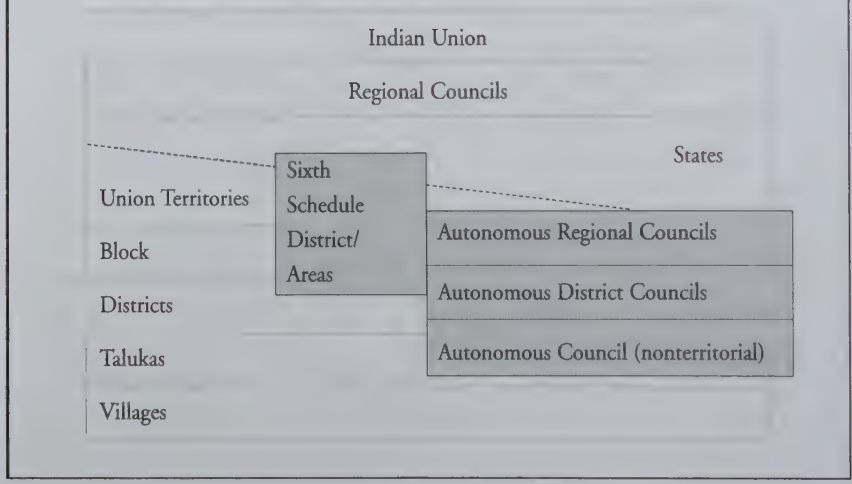


Figure 2. Actual tiers of the Indian administrative system



nition through the creation of a territorial unit, usually named for the group. Because land is limited, territorial recognition is the hardest to obtain. Another challenge in obtaining territorial recognition is that the creation of a territorial unit makes no sense without designation of some government functions; and that devolution of power is hard to sell to other tiers of government administration whose authority is reduced for this purpose (Rajagopalan 2000: 32–36).

One can also identify a continuum of territorial demands, including local territorial aspirations such as changing street or place names; special local representation arrangements such as new municipalities or autonomous councils; status changes of existing units within the system; renaming or restructuring existing units; creating a new unit within a state; creating a new unit outside a state; or secession (Ibid. 2001: 75). In Northeast India, all of these demands have been made by various parties. The first set of conditions is usually most easily met; but demands are often couched in secessionist terms and compromises range from changed local arrangements to the creation of new states.

demands [of insurgent groups] are often couched in secessionist terms

The Indian Constitution goes beyond the standard administrative hierarchy to accommodate two special categories of administrative units, both of which exist in Northeast India. The first category, under Article 371, applies primarily to the provincial level of administration—to states and union territories. The second category, the Sixth Schedule, was specially created for communities in Northeast India and provides for autonomous regional or district councils that bear the name of a particular community.

What does the Sixth Schedule provide and how has it been applied? Understanding this question is central to grasping the politics of conflict resolution in Northeast India.

Constituent Assembly debates, according to David Stuligross (1999), witnessed four views on arrangements "to provide representation to named ethnic communities," and all these were incorporated into the drafting of the Sixth Schedule: (a) autonomous districts directly supervised by the central government; (b) autonomous districts supervised by state governments; (c) a view opposed to autonomy on the grounds that it would undermine assimilation; and (d) a view that autonomy provisions could reflect changing developmental needs. The Constituent Assembly distinguished between two sets of tribal areas, those that had been under the colonial administration (e.g., in present-day Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Assam States) and those that had not (e.g., in present-day Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland). Assembly representatives felt that these latter areas were less than prepared for self-government, a belief challenged by the Nagas in particular. The Sixth Schedule covered mainly tribes that were

concentrated in specific areas and that were considered the hill tribes rather than the plains tribes, whose needs were to be addressed by a minority rights committee (Baruah 2005: 190).

Stuligross identifies five basic characteristics of the autonomous district councils (ADC). First, each of six major tribal groups was to have an autonomous district. The Khasi-Jaintia Hills District and the Garo Hills District today constitute the State of Meghalaya. The Lushai Hills District is now Mizoram State. The Mikir Hills District, which is now called Karbi Anglong, and North Cachar Hills Districts are part of Assam. The Naga Hills District never came into existence. Regional councils consistent with the territories of tribal units may be part of the district councils. Second, autonomous district councils may legislate on land and resource use, development policy, and customs and mores. Their authority, however, is tempered by the need for these laws to get the approval of the governor, who in turn is bound to take into account the advice of the state council of ministers. Third, the ADCs can try cases and also receive appeals, but this power is parallel to that of the state judicial system that culminates in the high court. Fourth, the ADCs are supposed to take charge of primary education in order to make it more responsive to local needs and reflective of local culture. Finally, ADCs have the authority to levy taxes, although they also get grants-in-aid from central and state governments.

The mapping of the thirteen accords above shows that the creation of territorial units and nonterritorial administrative arrangements has been used in more than half the accords as a conflict management device (see table 1).

Table 1 does not take into account those instances in which a conflict did not precede the formation of an administrative unit and which, therefore, did not require an accord. The formation of Meghalaya is one such instance. What began as a demand for a single hill state in Northeast India was replaced by demands from several groups for their own states, and the All-Party Hill Leaders' Conference focused its attention on the Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills, which already had autonomous district councils provided by the Sixth Schedule. A proposal to create a Hill Areas Committee in the Assam State Assembly quickly yielded to the demand by the residents of Khasi-Jaintia and Garo Hills for statehood for Meghalaya in 1972 when the Assamese language was adopted statewide as a medium of instruction.

When one reads this narrative, it becomes apparent that a clear route exists to upgrade a group's status that starts at the autonomous council level

Table 1. Peace accords and the creation and restructuring of administrative units in Northeast India

Date	Accord	Parties to the accord	Unit created
1960	Sixteen-Point Agreement	Government of India and Naga People's Convention	Created the State of Nagaland
1986	Memorandum of Understanding	Government of India and Laldenga on behalf of Mizo National Front	Created the State of Mizoram
1988	Memorandum of Understanding	Government of India and Tripura National Volunteers	Reorganization of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Councils (TTAADC) promised
1988	Darjeeling Hill Accord	Gorkhaland National Liberation Front, West Bengal Government, and Government of India	Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council
1993	Memorandum of Settlement	All-Bodo Students Union president and Assam State Government	Bodoland Autonomous Council
1993	Agartala Agreement/ Memorandum of Settlement	Tripura State Government and All-Tripura Tiger Force	Renewed commitment to reorganizing TTAADC
1994	Memorandum of Settlement	Mizoram State Government and Hmar People's Convention	Sinlung Hills Development Council
1995	Memoranda of Understanding	Assam State Government and representatives of community organizations of the Rabhas, Karbis, Tiwas, and Mishings	1.Karbi Anglong District Council became Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council 2. Rabha-Hasong Autonomous Council, Tiwa Autonomous Council, and Mishing Autonomous Council, which were not territorial, were established
2003	Bodoland Territorial Council Agreement	Government of India, Assam State Government, and Bodo Liberation Tigers	Bodoland Territorial Council

and ends with statehood. There also seems to be a limit to the number of states that the Indian Union will accept in the Northeast region: After Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh attained statehood in 1986, only councils have been created, and the path available to minority groups only goes as far as the establishment of an autonomous regional or district council as provided under the Sixth Schedule. In other words, no matter what the demand of the ethnic community in recent years, the arrangement arrived at is the creation of an autonomous council (e.g., a "development coun-

cil" or a "territorial council"). One reason for this may be the dispersed nature of the ethnic communities themselves, which would make a prospective state's resource base somewhat hard to muster. Once an autonomous council is formed, a group could then seek to establish a contiguous territorial base, and then recognition under the Sixth Schedule, which allows a greater degree of autonomy and control over resources.

A hallmark of the accords signed between 1993 and 1995 is that the Government of India disappeared as a signatory to them. It appears as if state governments initiated and concluded the negotiations. This may partly account for the autonomous council solutions. It may also be indicative of two other positive factors: a realization on the part of state politicians that if they cling to every last bit of control, the state could succumb to a violent and destabilizing insurgency, and a realization on the part of the national government that it does not need to be part of every negotiation. New Delhi's return to the talks in 2003 as a signatory to the Bodoland Territorial Council Agreement also suggests that as long as the councils are nonterritorial in nature, the negotiations can be left to state governments.

Has the redistribution of authority actually resolved any of these thirteen conflicts? Where an accord has provided for statehood, peace has generally been sustained, as reflected in the cases of Nagaland and Mizoram. By contrast, the autonomous councils seem to suspend the conflicts in some netherworld. They stand as valiant attempts at resolution, but (quite apart from who got left out and who disagreed) they also face problems common to units below the provincial level: a shrunken resource base, dependence on grants from the same governmental structures from which they sought autonomy, and in certain instances the ambivalence of having two administrative structures with the same jurisdiction. Given the insufficient resource base of these autonomous district councils and their dependence on other agencies for grants, what follows the accord is a redistribution of functions without capabilities and an incomplete redistribution of authority. Writing about the Bodo Autonomous Council and the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council, Verghese evocatively describes this last problem as "dyarchy" (Verghese 2004: 67, 278), bringing to mind the confusion and turf-battles of the provincial councils in the post-1919 phase of British rule in India.

Where an accord has provided for statehood, peace has generally been sustained

To say that parties to an accord that creates new units or arrangements should pay greater attention to viability issues is to ignore the reality of the conflict context—groups engaged in violent conflict do not have the leisure to consider administrative or long-term political issues when faced with further violence. The coupling of a ceasefire and surrender with the creation of the new arrangements compresses the time even further. One solution is to keep research and debate alive on issues related to redistribution of authority before, during, and after a conflict.

State Building and Accord Making

The thirteen accords mapped above were signed over the course of nearly six decades of the Indian state's existence. The conflicts they sought to end have all been related to India's state-building endeavor, and the key problem from the point of view of the Indian state is one of integration. Yet from the point of view of communities—ethnic or otherwise—the main problem is that of self-determination.

In these six decades, the Indian state-building enterprise has gone through many phases. Partition and the riots that accompanied it cast a dark shadow on the first phase, which was also the period in which the Indian Constitution was drafted. The twin fears of violence and vivisection were apparent in the provisions of the document. For every devolutionary measure there is a centralizing one—a federation with a strong center, emergency provisions that centralize the state, and a multitiered administration with avenues for the center to intervene. The Constituent Assembly shied away from terms like "minority" and spoke instead of "sections," even while guaranteeing cultural rights and setting up "schedules" of sections and subjects that would redress past discrimination.

The immediate postindependence period was also the phase in which the process of integrating the princely states into the new Indian Union was undertaken and completed. The Indian Union was unable or unwilling to exercise its will through the use of force (police action in Hyderabad was an exception) but the horror of a nation-state pulling in different directions made it impossible to let the integration question take a natural course. The process of integration had its problems, most famous of which involved Kashmir, Junagadh, and Hyderabad; however, the accession of Manipur State into the Indian Union was just as contentious. The Nagas did not want to be part of the Indian Union, and their first accord provided for a trial period after which they could decide. There did not appear to be room for compromise on either side in an atmosphere where the

state feared further loss of territory and people and the Nagas fiercely guarded their separateness and freedom.

However, the movement against the 1905 British Partition of Bengal had used linguistic nationalism as a rallying point for all Indian nationalists. The principle had great appeal in other parts of the subcontinent, and parallel to the nationalisms embodied by the anticolonial struggles in South Asia, the nationalism of linguistic communities—many of which had both ancient literary traditions and political histories—grew apace, with even the Indian National Congress restructuring its members along the lines of linguistic regions. In the second phase of India's state-building endeavor, then, these movements sought to bring their struggles to fruition. A States Reorganization Commission was established to look into the matter, but political circumstances dictated the direction of change. Potti Sriramulu fasted to his death in order to press his demand for a Telugu-speaking Andhra State separate from Madras State. The demand was conceded, and from 1955 onward, linguistic states were created as and when demanded.

This political climate was conducive to the affirmation of ethnolinguistic pride, including for Assamese language speakers as well. The late 1950s and early 1960s were a time of Assamese resurgence, and in 1960 Assamese was adopted as the official language of Assam State, conflating provincial and ethnolinguistic identity. This prompted non-Assamese living in this omnibus colonial creation called Assam to seek their own states. The Indian state was secure enough by this time to accommodate internal redefinitions of its territory. Between 1960 and 1987, six states were created around Assam. The first of these was Nagaland. In 1960, the Sixteen-Point Agreement was signed with the Naga People's Convention, and one of its provisions was statehood, which was finalized in 1963. Because the Naga National Council did not accept the accord, the insurgency continued.

The early 1960s were a period of crisis for India. In 1962, India and China fought over China's claims to territory in Ladakh and the North East Frontier Province (now Arunachal Pradesh). Soon after, India went to war with Pakistan in 1965. Two changes of leadership also occurred during this period with the deaths in close succession of two sitting Indian Prime Ministers, Jawaharlal Nehru and Lal Bahadur Shastri. Indian state building entered a new phase, with decreasing tolerance for secessionist propaganda.[5] It became clear that international borders needed to be bet-

ter secured and, if in dispute, to be negotiated and secured in the interim. The importance of the Northeast region in the security of India vis-à-vis China was illustrated amply. Fear of renewed conflict with China meant that, more than ever, politics in Northeast India would be looked at through a security lens—a problem that still plagues the region.

A major power shift in Indian politics occurred in 1967 when several states first voted non-Congress governments into power. For the first time, the potential existed for a truly antagonistic relationship between the center and states, and provisions that strengthened the hands of the national government would be used with increasing frequency to enforce the writ of the center. In 1969, the Indian National Congress Party split, and the faction that remained in power ushered in an era of populist and leftist politics, accompanied by a willingness to be assertive.

India's ability to fight on two fronts was illustrated in the 1971 war with Pakistan over the political crisis in what was then East Pakistan (and later became Bangladesh), but that war underscored two other things. The first was the openness of India's eastern frontier, which enabled large numbers of illegal immigrants to settle in Assam and other parts of Northeast India. The second was that India was vulnerable to massive population movements across its borders, as the refugee crisis that preceded the war showed. India's success in the war, and Indira Gandhi's popularity, presented the Indian state with an opportunity to act decisively in many spheres.

[The 1971] war underscored...the openness of India's eastern frontier

This opportunity, however, was used to strengthen the regime at the expense of the institutions of state. This phase culminated in the promulgation of the Emergency, which lasted nineteen months. Political mobilization against the Emergency rallied a wide variety of forces outside the ruling Congress Party, and many of these built working relationships that would outlast the Emergency. The elections of March 1977 also definitively illustrated to Indians that they had the power to hold leaders accountable, as the Congress government suffered a dramatic electoral defeat.

In 1972, Meghalaya, Manipur, and Tripura became states. The Shillong Accord was signed in 1975, but its main result appears to have been that it assured the rise of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland as the main interlocutor for the Naga cause.

Three years of coalition government followed by four years of Congress Party rule from 1980 to 1984 coincided with an increase in violence across India. The agitation against illegal immigration in Assam and the Punjab insurgency happened simultaneously in the early 1980s. In the years immediately after Indira Gandhi's assassination, however, five accords were signed, four of which were in Northeast India—the Assam Accord (1985), the Mizo Accord (1986), the MOU with the Tripura National Volunteers (1988), and the Darjeeling Hills Accord (1988)—along with the Rajiv-Longowal Accord (Punjab, 1985). Peace, unfortunately, did not ensue. Around the same time, India also facilitated peace talks between the Sri Lankan Government and Tamil militant groups, signing a pact with Sri Lanka whereby India took on the role of guarantor of an accord between the warring parties. In the years that followed, conflict seemed to be everywhere in India, prompting V. S. Naipaul to write about "A Million Mutinies Now." Whether India was living out Huntington's prediction about what happens when a gap exists between mobilization and institutionalization or whether its politics were simply a function of bad policies and bad policing is a question for another study.

The 1996 national elections brought an important shift in the equation between New Delhi and the states. The elections brought to power at the national level the first of a series of coalition governments for which support from regional parties would be decisive to the survival of the government. The importance of these regional forces has been a check on the tendency of the national government to intervene arbitrarily in the functioning of the state governments. Greater state autonomy remains an issue for regional parties, and this pro-devolution climate is somewhat reflected in the willingness of state governments in Northeast India to enter into accords that set up autonomous councils and autonomous districts. Furthermore, the prevailing social climate is one in which electorates around the country are showing that what they care about most are the quality of governance and the quality of life. They are less tolerant than before of any agency or organization whose actions systematically get in the way of their chance for a better life. On the other hand, networking among militant groups in the Northeast

[Northeast India] is experiencing unprecedented levels of violence

has grown quickly as they have begun to use neighboring states as safe havens. Despite the population's frustration with insurgency and instability, the region is experiencing unprecedented levels of violence, so much so that ongoing peace efforts acquire a cosmetic appearance. Thus, even as the Indian polity is in a mood to negotiate and devolve power in order to get on with the business of improving lives, it is hard for the Indian state to shift from a security lens to a broader one that would facilitate peace for Northeast India.

Comparing Mizoram and Tripura: What Seems to Work?

The Mizo Accord is commonly acknowledged as one of the most successful peace accords signed. Although Manipur and Tripura are each experiencing very high levels of violence, it is more expedient to juxtapose Tripura's experience with Mizoram's, since no accords have been signed in Manipur.

The success of the Mizo Accord is attributed to many factors. Colonial policy had the consequence of facilitating the rise of a new, modernizing elite. This elite took the lead in constructing an inclusive, generic Mizo identity for Lushai and non-Lushai alike. Mizo political mobilization also cut across classes, and the movement never lost its ideological focus. An attitude of give and take smoothed the progress of peace talks; Laldenga and the MNF gave up the demand for a greater Mizoram and the Mizo Congress Chief Minister Lalthanhawla resigned to enable the Mizo National Front to lead the postaccord Mizoram cabinet. This reflected in the support of the general public in Mizoram for an end to conflict. Observers write that the Mizo peace has been sustainable because it is rooted in these factors and because there is a close working relationship between the state government and Mizo civil society, with the administration reflecting the diversity of Mizoram society better than is usual.

the general public in Mizoram...[supports] an end to conflict

Tripura, on the other hand, appears from all accounts to be a society whose fabric has been fraying. Two interrelated political developments signaled the starting point for the decades of violence witnessed in the state. The first occurred when the population of Bengali settlers came to outnumber Tripura's tribal population. The second development

involved the safeguards put in place to reassure the tribal communities in the 1980s. Observers write that beyond these origins, among the militant outfits operating in Tripura the line between cause and criminality has blurred. In other words, it is hard to tell what cause the Tripura militants are fighting for, since much of their activity seems purely criminal in nature. Material concerns and fear seem to prompt insurgency rather than a belief in an identity- or ideology-driven cause.

much of [Tripura militants'] activity seems purely criminal in nature

This comparison suggests that where an insurgency is driven by belief in a cause and where political mobilization rallies around that cause, it is possible for the warring parties to arrive at mutually acceptable terms for a ceasefire and long-term solutions. Where struggle descends to criminality, conflict resolution is harder. Peace accords give expression to shared readings of a problem and shared expectations of a resolution; they do not have the capacity to address law and order issues. If Mizoram and Tripura represent two distant points on a continuum, then many of Northeast India's other conflicts and militant organizations can be placed on a line between these points. Where each conflict lies along this line is indicative of the prospects for a lasting peace. The greater challenge is to recognize where a given interlocutor stands on this ideology-driven/material gain continuum and, even more, how complicit other parties are in locking the interlocutor into that space. Simply put, it is hard to categorize the degree to which an organization is ideological or criminal and to understand who else has an interest in keeping them that way.

Braiding Loose Strands

While a brief look at the thirteen accords signed in Northeast India would suggest tremendous eagerness on the part of the population to arrive at a way of living together peacefully, Manipur's outstanding conflicts and ULFA's continuing ability to operate raise questions about political will and sincerity that place a cloud over all other discussions as well. Measures to end conflict can generate conflict when important stakeholders are left out of a peace process, when dissenters split an insurgent organization rather than surrender, when the negotiations and the terms of an accord address one group's concerns without taking into account those of anoth-

er and, finally, when accords demonstrate to other communities what they might obtain if they were to undertake similar protest or insurgent actions. Redistributing authority by creating territorial or nonterritorial means of representation and self-governance is a time-honored conflict resolution measure that is extensively used in Northeast India. One useful lesson is that when many levels exist through which a group's status can be upgraded administratively, the parties to a conflict have more room for negotiation (rather than being stuck with only a few options presented in an all-or-nothing fashion). On the other hand, the real problem of devolution of power remains, and creating new administrative units is not a guarantor of viability, resource independence, or autonomy. Overlapping and intersecting visions limit the utility of almost any solution enshrined by accords. It may be useful to track the willingness and ability of a state to negotiate peace at different stages in the state-building process. This is especially so because many of the communities at conflict with the state (in Northeast India and elsewhere) consider themselves protostates or states seeking to regain their sovereignty.

Lessons

Northeast India is a microcosm of India's own diversity of ethnicities, races, faiths, languages, and interests. Moreover, although the communities that live in the region are lumped together, their experiences, grievances, demands, and conflicts are different. Any project that ventures to generalize across this variety must necessarily fail to capture the complexity of causes and consequences. However, it is still useful to seek lessons from cases that, even at first glance, show what can go right and what can go wrong.

Peace accords work when they follow from a peace process that is inclusive, like the 1986 Mizo Accord and unlike the Bodo Accords of both 1993 and 2003. Even when one might argue, as in the Naga conventions that preceded the 1960 agreement, that a popular, consultative process was in place, this process must include important protagonists (in the Naga case, the Naga National Council). A peace process that builds consensus and coalition leads to understandings that can build community. But the issue is not just whether an accord and its provisions are acceptable to

Peace accords work when they follow from a peace process that is inclusive

most: an inclusive, sustained peace process is also the platform to debate the feasibility of provisions and to craft arrangements that all parties will facilitate rather than disrupt. This is especially the case when territorial adjustments are part of the peace package. The role of civil society is important if the right to speak at the peace table is not restricted to combatants alone (Das 2007). Inclusive peace processes create safe spaces for conversation with even the most militant groups and can facilitate mainstreaming of these groups into a peace process. Inclusive processes can generate a momentum that makes the question of political will or discriminatory attitudes irrelevant.

The scope of accords also varies from basic ceasefires to those that are very comprehensive but vague. Omnibus accords are potentially dangerous for two reasons. First, when the ceasefire provisions are violated, it becomes hard to implement any of the other promises made. The force of public and elite opinion mitigates against concessions to the party that first breaks the ceasefire, even if both sides are responsible for violations. Second, almost all accords in the Northeast contain provisions promising cultural safeguards, educational opportunities, and government support for development projects. Both nonimplementation and implementation can be problematic (the latter because provisions are not always evenhanded in their conception, and negotiations leave out important stakeholders); the peace process might move forward more effectively if the ceasefire were separated from whatever politics accompanies these provisions and projects. Moreover, such projects are usually considered to be "too little, too late" because there is always a time-lag between the first articulation of grievances and the signing of an accord. This time-lag is sharpest when insurgent demands are territorial in nature and an accord provides for nonterritorial concessions. The ceasefire could be the casualty of an overly ambitious accord.

Concerns about the scope of the peace accord bring us back to the importance of the peace process. Peace accords sometimes do, and should, foreshadow a framework for further negotiations. This framework might include creating a timetable for addressing various categories of issues (rather than tackling them all with the first agreement): demobilization, disarmament, and reintegration of combatants; transitional justice, impunity, and amnesty; cultural safeguards and educational opportunities for minority or disenfranchised groups; and economic development and investment. It is critical not just to separate the issues,

but also to keep expanding the number of stakeholders at the peace table. Expanding the groups involved in peace negotiations also creates opportunities to undercut the coalition building that militant groups in this region engage in constantly.

The endpoint toward which the peace process is moving is just as important as its inclusive nature. The evidence from Northeast India indicates that a peace accord is not a sufficient endpoint for a peace process. The thirteen cases represented by the accords surveyed in this study show that peace accords cannot really deliver peace most of the time. To view them as an endpoint is to load them with unrealistic expectations. Rather, peace needs to be constantly renegotiated; as exemplified by the fact that even the one accord that is acclaimed as successful—the Mizo Accord—needed to be followed by two other accords in order to keep the peace. If focused on the accords alone, which are not destinations but milestones, participants are unable to visualize or strategize the journey (peace building or conflict transformation) successfully.

Five important practical lessons for peacemakers and policymakers can be drawn from this study:

1. *Promote a peace process rather than expecting a peace accord to be a cure-all:* Mediators, facilitators, and funders must shift their focus away from bringing conflict parties to a peace table to "thrash out" an accord. Instead, all parties need to work to create multiple platforms for dialogue at every level, and at the same time urge the creation of channels for feedback to the main negotiators. Accords should be downplayed as bookmarks or milestones on the road to lasting peace; and the accent needs to be placed on strengthening the process, with a view to making it part of the political mainstream.
2. *Invest in civil society:* Because every discussion must consider the role and nature of the peace process, the importance of building and reinforcing the capacity of civil society to participate in and support such a process by creating constituencies for peace becomes clear.
3. *Broaden the constituencies and the issues addressed at the peace table:* Conventionally, peace talks are held by a closed circle and with a fixed agenda. It is important to innovate a different format or to supplement this traditional one, so that the peace

table takes an inclusive, open-ended "round-table" approach and has a better chance of accommodating overlapping claims.

4. *Take a holistic view but disaggregate the solution:* Facilitators and negotiators should take a broad view of the context rather than dealing with specific symptoms or issues in isolation, but nonetheless mark each area of common understanding with a separate written agreement. Whereas one violation in an omnibus accord can derail an entire process, having separate agreements can keep a process alive even when one is jeopardized. It is especially important that the parties sign separate ceasefire and cultural agreements, and create platforms to jointly address specific problems and find concrete and feasible solutions.
5. *Imagine nonterritorial solutions:* Territorial demands are a mark of conflict escalation, and territorial solutions are hard to implement and may ratchet up the demands of other groups. In a postmodern era, it is time to reimagine politics and process beyond strictly territorial considerations. That is the new research agenda for scholars of conflict transformation and governance.

A process-oriented approach to peacemaking, where accords simply function as bookmarks for particular agreements, accommodates the possibility that people will change their minds; or, in game-theory terms, "defect" after signing the accord. A good peace process sets up the modalities and avenues for future renegotiation, which over time should make articulation of interests by means of violence obsolete. This type of process-oriented approach works as an incentive to create inclusive consultative processes and encourages the creation of back-up plans. Accepting change as inevitable makes a peace process sustainable, and the habit of dialogue results in the incorporation of the peace process into the practice of everyday politics. Politics transforms conflict by creating the institutional platform for a culture of consultation and consensus-building that fosters accountability and responsiveness on the one hand and mutual understanding on the other, rendering redundant the practice of signing unsatisfactory peace accords.

Endnotes

1. Samir Kumar Das (2005a: 130) observes that the signing of an accord changes the conflict, the state, and the ethnic communities in question, so that renewed conflict does not have the same form or even the same configuration of actors. Accords disarm, disconnect, and disintegrate ethnic communities, even as the state's treatment of them has a unifying tendency. The pre-accord agenda of a community is transformed. The state itself is transformed with the mainstreaming of the rebels after the accord (Ibid.: 134–36).
2. Baruah (2005: 110–12) discusses the contents and context of a pamphlet, "Bedrock of Naga Society," that was published in 2000. It contested this view of Naga history and stresses that historically each Naga village was independent and that inter-village rivalry rather than national identity characterized the relations between Naga communities.
3. "Princely states" refers to those Indian principalities that accepted the suzerainty of the British crown, but in which the suzerains continued to officiate as rulers of their territory.
4. The word "schedule" is the Indian term referring to an official list of "tribes," as stipulated in Article 342 of the Indian Constitution.
5. Interestingly, elsewhere in India, the war prompted fund-raising efforts by another secessionist group, the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (Dravida Progressive Movement), which suspended its demand for an independent state. At the same time, the center felt it could not countenance secessionist movements anywhere and amended the rights to speech and association accordingly. The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam gave up the demand for independence and completed its transition to the political mainstream (see Rajagopalan 2001: 153–57).

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Appendix

Peace Accords in Northeast India

Appendix: Peace Accords in Northeast India

Date	Accord	Parties to the Accord	Noteworthy Features
1947	Naga-Akbar Hydari Accord	Akbar Hydari, Governor of Assam and Naga National Council representatives	Nagas were given a measure of autonomy for ten years, but the terms of autonomy were not clarified, and conflict ensued.
1960	Sixteen-Point Agreement	Government of India and Naga People's Convention	Created the state of Nagaland. The Naga National Council, which was underground, refused to recognize this arrangement.
1975	Shillong Accord	Governor L. P. Singh of Nagaland and underground organizations	The "underground organizations" surrendered, but the accord was seen as being of no benefit to Nagas.
1985	Assam Accord	AASU and AGSP representatives, Union Home Secretary, and Chief Secretary of Assam State	Immigrants who entered Assam State between January 1, 1966, and March 24, 1971, were to be registered under the Foreigners Act, their names deleted from the voting rolls for ten years and restored thereafter. Those who had previously been deported but reentered would be expelled. All who immigrated to Assam State after March 25, 1971, would be deported under IMDT Act 83.
1986	Memorandum of Understanding	Government of India and Mizo National Front leader Laldenga	Mizo National Front and affiliates gave up violence and secession demand. They also gave up their links to TTNV, PLA, and other armed groups. Statehood was granted.
1988	Memorandum of Understanding	Tripura National Volunteers and Government of India	Restoration of tribal lands and prevention of further alienation. Reorganization of the Tripura Tribal Areas Autonomous District Councils (TTAADC) to include tribal areas and exclude nontribal areas. State boundaries were also secured.
1988	Darjeeling Hill Accord	Gorkhaland National Liberation Front, West Bengal State Government, and Government of India	Sikkim cut off. Statehood demand dropped but not removed completely from the political discourse. Ghising keeps raising issues about status of Darjeeling vis-à-vis Nepal and about administrative level of DGHC. Also, since the DGHC is not coterminous with the district, a diarchy exists in Darjeeling.

Date	Accord	Parties to the Accord	Noteworthy Features
1993	Memorandum of Settlement	All-Bodo Students Union, Assam State Government, in presence of Government of India minister and Chief Minister	Surrender and rehabilitation of ABSU cadres in return for establishment of the Bodoland Autonomous Council.
1993	Agartala Agreement/ Memorandum of Settlement	Tripura government and the All-Tripura Tiger Force	Renews commitment to reorganizing the TTAADC and provides cultural safeguards for Tripuras.
1994	Memorandum of Settlement	Mizoram State Government and Hmar People's Convention	Sinlung Hills Development Council established.
1995	Memoranda of Understanding	Assam State Government and representatives of community organizations of the Rabhas, Karbis, Tiwas, and Mishings	1. Karbi Anglong District Council became Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council. 2. Rabha-Hasong Autonomous Council, Tiwa Autonomous Council, and Mishing Autonomous Council, which were not territorial, were established.
2003	Bodo Territorial Council Memorandum	Government of India, Assam State Government, and Bodo Liberation Tigers	Bodo Territorial Council established, plus cultural provisions.
2005	Memorandum of Understanding	Mizoram State Government and Bru National Liberation Front	Government agreed to repatriate displaced Reangs in Tripura. The Mizoram Scheduled Tribes list will now list Reangs as Brus.

Internal Conflicts and State-Building Challenges in Asia

Project Information

Project Rationale, Purpose, and Outline

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Rationale

Internal Conflicts and State-Building Challenges in Asia is part of a larger East-West Center project on state building and governance in Asia that investigates political legitimacy of governments, the relationship of the military to the state, the development of political and civil societies and their roles in democratic development, the role of military force in state formation, and the dynamics and management of internal conflicts arising from nation- and state-building processes. An earlier project investigating internal conflicts arising from nation- and state-building processes focused on conflicts arising from the political consciousness of minority communities in China (Tibet and Xinjiang), Indonesia (Aceh and Papua), and southern Philippines (the Moro Muslims). Funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York, that highly successful project was completed in March 2005. The present project, which began in July 2005, investigates the causes and consequences of internal conflicts arising from state- and nation-building processes in Burma/Myanmar, southern Thailand, Nepal, northeast India, and Sri Lanka, and explores strategies and solutions for their peaceful management and eventual settlement.

Internal conflicts have been a prominent feature of the Asian political landscape since 1945. Asia has witnessed numerous civil wars, armed insurgencies, coups d'état, regional rebellions, and revolutions. Many have been protracted; several have far-reaching domestic and international consequences. The civil war in Pakistan led to the break up of that country in 1971; separatist struggles challenge the political and territorial integrity of China, India, Indonesia, Burma, the Philippines, Thailand, and Sri Lanka; political uprisings in Thailand (1973 and 1991), the Philippines (1986), South Korea (1986), Taiwan (1991) Bangladesh (1991), and Indonesia (1998) resulted in dramatic political change in those countries. Although the political uprisings in Burma (1988) and China (1989) were suppressed, the political systems in those countries, as well as in Vietnam, continue to confront problems of legitimacy that could become acute; and

radical Islam poses serious challenges to stability in Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Indonesia. The Thai military ousted the democratically-elected government of Thaksin Shinawatra in 2006. In all, millions of people have been killed in the internal conflicts, and tens of millions have been displaced. Moreover, the involvement of external powers in a competitive manner (especially during the Cold War) in several of these conflicts had negative consequences for domestic and regional security.

Internal conflicts in Asia can be traced to contestations over political legitimacy (the title to rule), national identity, state building, and distributive justice—that are often interconnected. With the bankruptcy of the socialist model and transitions to democracy in several countries, the number of internal conflicts over political legitimacy has declined in Asia. However, the legitimacy of certain governments continues to be contested from time to time, and the remaining communist and authoritarian systems are likely to confront challenges to their legitimacy in due course. Internal conflicts also arise from the process of constructing modern nation-states, and the unequal distribution of material and status benefits. Although many Asian states have made considerable progress in constructing national communities and viable states, several countries, including some major ones, still confront serious problems that have degenerated into violent conflict. By affecting the political and territorial integrity of the state as well as the physical, cultural, economic, and political security of individuals and groups, these conflicts have great potential to affect domestic and international stability.

Purpose

Internal Conflicts and State-Building Challenges in Asia examines internal conflicts arising from the political consciousness of minority communities in Burma/Myanmar, southern Thailand, northeast India, Nepal, and Sri Lanka. Except for Nepal, these states are not in danger of collapse. However, they do face serious challenges at the regional and local levels which, if not addressed, can negatively affect the vitality of the national state in these countries. Specifically, the project has a threefold purpose: (1) to develop an in-depth understanding of the domestic, transnational, and international dynamics of internal conflicts in these countries in the context of nation- and state-building strategies; (2) to examine how such conflicts have affected the vitality of the state; and (3) to explore strategies and solutions for the peaceful management and eventual settlement of these conflicts.

Design

A study group has been organized for each of the five conflicts investigated in the study. With a principal researcher for each, the study groups comprise practitioners and scholars from the respective Asian countries, including the region or province that is the focus of the conflict, as well as from Australia, Britain, Belgium, Sweden, and the United States. The participants list that follows shows the composition of the study groups.

All five study groups met jointly for the first time in Washington, D.C., on October 30–November 3, 2005. Over a period of five days, participants engaged in intensive discussion of a wide range of issues pertaining to the conflicts investigated in the project. In addition to identifying key issues for research and publication, the meeting facilitated the development of cross-country perspectives and interaction among scholars who had not previously worked together. Based on discussion at the meeting, twenty-five policy papers were commissioned.

The study groups met separately in the summer of 2006 for the second set of meetings, which were organized in collaboration with respected policy-oriented think tanks in each host country. The Burma and southern Thailand study group meetings were held in Bangkok, July 10–11 and July 12–13, respectively. These meetings were cosponsored by The Institute of Security and International Studies, Chulalongkorn University. The Nepal study group was held in Kathmandu, Nepal, July 17–19, and was cosponsored by the Social Science Baha. The northeast India study group met in New Delhi, India, August 9–10. This meeting was cosponsored by the Centre for Policy Research. The Sri Lanka meeting was held in Colombo, Sri Lanka, August 14–16, and was cosponsored by the Centre for Policy Alternatives. In each of these meetings, scholars, and practitioners reviewed and critiqued papers produced for the meetings and made suggestions for revision.-

Publications

This project will result in twenty to twenty-five policy papers providing a detailed examination of particular aspects of each conflict. Subject to satisfactory peer review, these 18,000- to 24,000-word essays will be published in the East-West Center Washington *Policy Studies* series, and will be circulated widely to key personnel and institutions in the policy and intellectual communities and the media in the respective Asian countries, the United States, and other relevant countries. Some studies will be published in the East-West Center Washington *Working Papers* series.

Public Forums

To engage the informed public and to disseminate the findings of the project to a wide audience, public forums have been organized in conjunction with study group meetings.

Five public forums were organized in Washington, D.C., in conjunction with the first study group meeting. The first forum, cosponsored by The Johns Hopkins University's School of Advanced International Studies, discussed the conflict in southern Thailand. The second, cosponsored by The Sigur Center for Asian Studies of The George Washington University, discussed the conflict in Burma. The conflicts in Nepal were the focus of the third forum, which was cosponsored by the Asia Program at The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. The fourth public meeting, cosponsored by the Foreign Policy Studies program at The Brookings Institution, discussed the conflicts in northeast India. The fifth forum, cosponsored by the South Asia Program of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, focused on the conflict in Sri Lanka.

Funding Support

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Background of the Conflicts in Northeast India

Northeast India owes its geographical distinctiveness in relation to the Indian "mainland" to the partition of the subcontinent in 1947. But as an official Indian category it dates from 1971 following a radical reorganization of internal boundaries and creation of new states. The region is connected with the rest of India through a narrow corridor, which is approximate thirty-three kilometers wide on the eastern side and twenty-one kilometers wide on the western side. This constitutes barely one percent of the boundaries of the region, while the remaining 99 percent of its boundaries are international—with China's Tibet region to the north, Bangladesh to the southwest, Bhutan to the northwest, and Burma/Myanmar to the east.

The region comprises the seven Indian states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura—also known as "Seven Sisters." Since 2003, Sikkim has been included as the eighth member of the regional North Eastern Council. With the exception of Nagaland, which became a state in 1963, most of the states in the region were reorganized between 1971 and 1987. These cover a total area of over 254,645 square kilometers (about 8.7 percent of India's territory) and, according to the 2001 Census of India, have a combined population of 38,495,089 people—roughly 3.73 per cent of the country's population. The region accounts for one of the largest concentrations of "tribal" people in the country—constituting about 30 percent of the total population—though with a skewed distribution of over 60 percent in Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, and Nagaland together. Three states—Nagaland, Mizoram and Meghalaya—contain an overwhelming majority of Christians (90, 87, and 70 percent respectively). The region is characterized by extraordinary ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity, with more than 160 Scheduled Tribes and over 400 distinct tribal and subtribal groupings, and a large and diverse nontribal population concentrated mainly in Assam, Manipur, and Tripura. An estimated 220 languages belonging to the Indo-Aryan, Sino-Tibetan, and Austric language families are spoken in the region—the largest concentration of languages in the subcontinent.

Although the Ahoms were successful in gradually consolidating the greater part of the region under a single political unit in the course of their rule (1228–1826), court chronicles of the Kacharis (1515–1818), the

Jaintias (1500–1835), the Manipur Kings (1714–1949), and other local groups point out how they had historically retained varying degrees of independence into the nineteenth century, when the British took over the region. Colonial rulers took nearly a century to finally annex the entire region and exercised their control over the hills primarily as a loosely administered "frontier" area, thereby separating it from the "subjects" of the thickly populated plains.

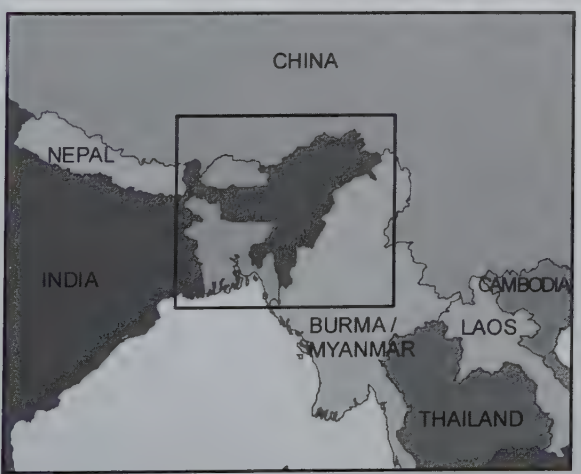
Northeast India has been the theater of the earliest and longest-lasting insurgency in the country—in the Naga Hills—where violence centering on independentist demands commenced in 1952, followed by the Mizo rebellion in 1966 and a multiplicity of more recent conflicts that have proliferated especially since the late 1970s. Every state in the region excepting Sikkim is currently affected by some form of insurgent violence, and four of these (Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, and Tripura) have witnessed scales of conflict that could—at least between 1990 and 2000, be characterized as low intensity conflicts. The Government of India has entered into cease-fire agreements—renewed from time to time until today—with two of the leading factions of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland in 1997 and 2001. The Government of India and one of these factions, the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak-Muivah), are now reportedly involved in discussing "substantive issues" while trying to reach a "permanent and honorable" solution to the long-standing problem. The Mizo National Front and the Government of India signed a Memorandum of Understanding in 1986 and their rebel leader, Laldenga, subsequently formed his own political party and became chief minister of Mizoram State. The United National Liberation Front (UNLF)—the armed opposition group active in the valley of Manipur, contests the "Merger Agreement" that the king of Manipur signed with the Government of India in 1949 on the grounds that the king signed it under duress. The United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA) too questions Assam's inclusion in the Indian Union. Attempts have been made to bring UNLF and ULFA to the negotiating table. The Government's response to independentist demands so far has included enacting extraordinary legislation like the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act of 1958, utilizing security forces to suppress rebellion, promoting economic development, and negotiating peace agreements with the insurgent organizations.

Although landlocked on all sides, migration, whether from across the international borders or from other parts of India, continues unabated. A

significant part of the immigration into the region is thought to be cross-border and illegal—especially of foreigners from Bangladesh. The region has frequently been rocked by violent tremors of anti-immigrant sentiments. Although a major problem, the Government often finds it difficult to detect and disenfranchise—let alone deport the foreigners.

Conflicts in Northeast India have not only focused on the Indian state, but also manifest intergroup and intragroup dimensions. Intergroup conflicts based on mutually rivaling "homeland" demands (say, between the Bodos and the non-Bodos, the Karbis and the Dimasas in Assam, the Nagas and the Kukis/Paites in the hills of Manipur, the Mizos and the Brus/Reangs in Mizoram, etc.) and struggle for power among competing groups have sparked conflicts and internal displacements. The multiple forms of resistance in the exceptionally diverse ethnic landscape have produced politics and struggles with multiple competing agendas.

Map of Northeast India



- Capital Cities
- State Capitals
- Provincial Boundaries
- Country Boundaries

Note: Map boundaries and locations are approximate. Geographic features and their names do not imply official endorsement or recognition by the UN.

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Peace accords in Northeast India :
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About this Issue

This monograph examines the effectiveness and sustainability of peace accords in Northeast India. A comparative examination of thirteen accords signed in the region between 1949 and 2005 finds that only one—the Mizo Accord of 1986—was successful in creating an enduring peace. Most often, mediators and negotiators have seen a peace accord as an endpoint instead of viewing it as just one part of a peace process. Unfortunately, the accord-making processes in Northeast India have been flawed: preaccord talks have not been inclusive; the provisions agreed upon with one group frequently conflict with the interests of another; accords contain provisions that cannot be implemented; or they do not deal with core issues. Moreover, no responsive and accountable political infrastructure has been created in Northeast India either for conflict resolution or for governance itself. Arguing that holistic peace processes are more important than peace accords on their own, the author argues that to be successful peace processes should contain multiple platforms for dialogue, build civil society's ability to engage in the process, be inclusive and sustained, involve separate pacts for each area of agreement rather than omnibus accords, and imagine nonterritorial solutions.

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